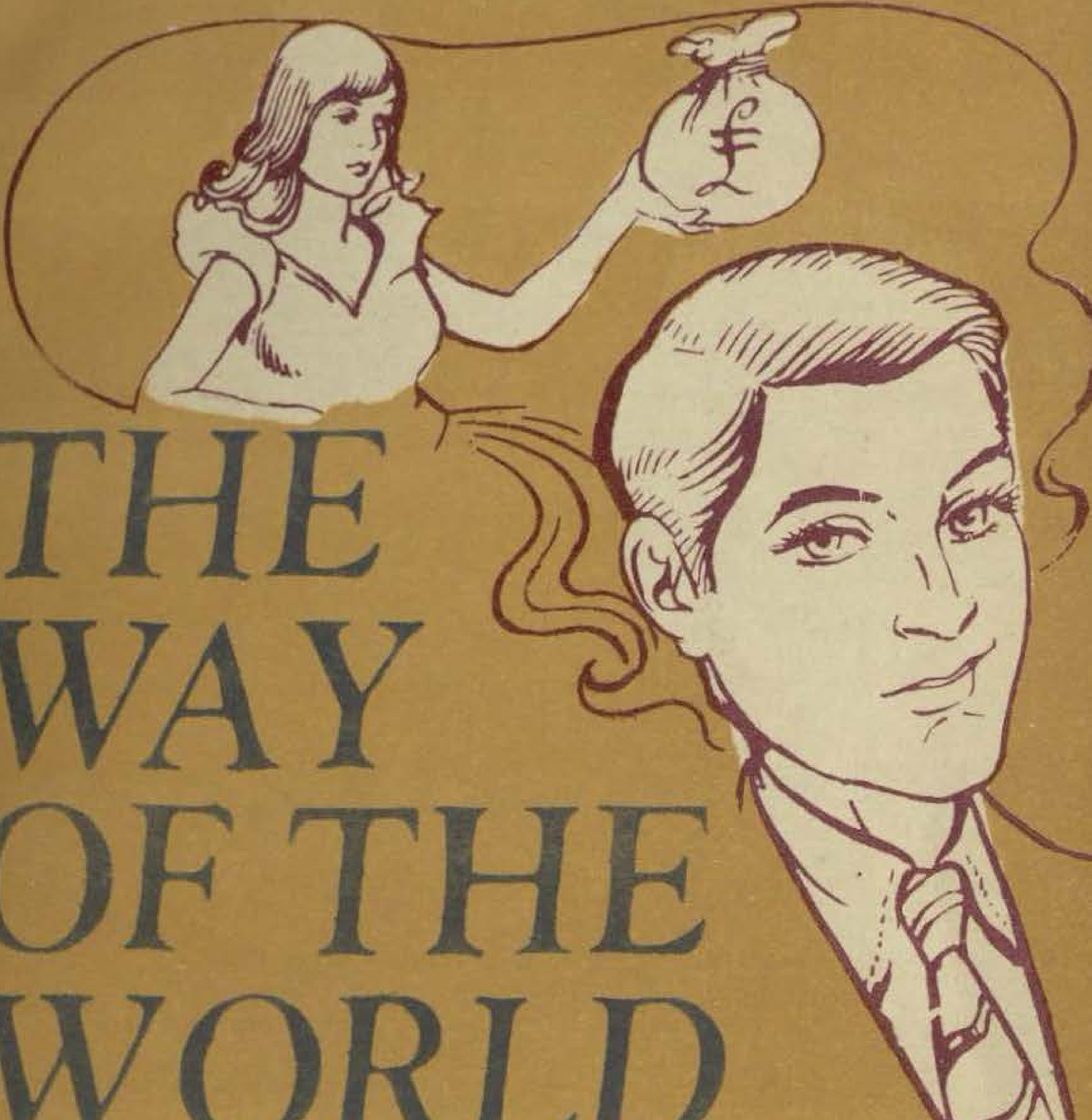
WILLIAM CONGREVE




# THE WAY OF THE WORLD

**KITAB MAHAL**

URDU BAZAR, LAHORE.

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# 1

# *Life and Works of Congreve*

**Childhood and Youth**

William Congreve was born in 1670, at Bardsey, in the neighbourhood of Leeds. His father, a younger son of a very ancient Staffordshire family, had distinguished himself among the Cavaliers in the Civil War, was set down after the Restoration for the Order of the Royal Oak, and subsequently settled in Ireland, under the patronage of the Earl of Burlington.

Congreve passed his childhood and youth in Ireland. He was sent to school at Kilkenny, and thence went to the University of Dublin. His learning does great honour to his instructors. From his writings it appears not only that he was well acquainted with Latin literature, but that his knowledge of the Greek poets was such as was not, in his time, common even in a college.

**Two Ambitions**

When he had completed his academical studies, he was sent to London to study the law, and was entered of the Middle Temple. He troubled himself, however, very little about pleading or conveyancing, and gave himself up to literature and society. Two kinds of ambition early took possession of his mind, and often pulled it in opposite directions. He was conscious of great fertility of thought and power of ingenious combination. His lively conversation, his polished manners, and his highly respectable connections had obtained for him ready access to the best company. He longed to be a great writer ; he longed to be a man of fashion. Either object was within his reach. But could he secure both ? Was there not something vulgar in letters—something inconsistent with the easy, apathetic graces of a man of the mode ? Was it aristocratical to be confounded with creatures who lived in the cocklofts of Grub Street, to bargain with publishers, to hurry printers' devils, to squabble with managers, to be applauded or hissed by pit, boxes, and galleries ? Could he forego the renown of being the first wit of his age? Could he attain that renown without sullying, what he valued quite as much, his character for gentility ? The history of his life is the history of a conflict between these two impulses. In his youth, the desire of literary fame had the mastery ; but soon the meaner ambition overpowered the higher, and obtained supreme dominion over his mind.

**His First Play**

His first work, a novel of no great value, he published under the assumed name of Cleophil. His second was *The Old Bachelor*,

acted in 1693, a play inferior indeed to his other comedies, but, in its own line, inferior to them alone. The plot is equally destitute of interest and of probability. The characters are either not distinguishable, or are distinguished only by peculiarities of the most glaring kind. But the dialogue is resplendent with wit and eloquence—which indeed are so abundant that the fool comes in for an ample share—and yet preserves a certain colloquial air, a certain indescribable ease, of which Wycherly had given no example and which Sheridan in vain attempted to imitate. The author, divided between pride and shame—pride at having written a good play and shame at having done an ungentlemanlike thing—pretended that he had merely scribbled a few scenes for his own amusement, and affected to yield unwillingly to the importunities of those who pressed him to try his fortune on the stage. *The Old Bachelor* was seen in manuscript by Dryden, one of whose best qualities was a hearty and generous admiration for the talents of others. He declared that he had never seen such a first play, and lent his services to bring it into a form fit for representation. Nothing was wanted to the success of the piece. It was so cast as to bring into play all the comic talent, and to exhibit on the boards in one view all the beauty which Drury Lane Theatre, then the only theatre in London, could assemble. The result was a complete triumph: and the author was gratified with rewards more substantial than the applauses of the pit. Montagu, then a lord of the Treasury, immediately gave him a place, and, in a short time, added the reversion of another place of much greater value, which, however, did not become vacant till many years had elapsed.

**The Double-Dealer**

In 1694, Congreve brought out *The Double-Dealer*, a comedy in which all the powers which had produced *The Old Bachelor* showed themselves matured by time and improved by exercise. But the audience was shocked by the characters of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood. And, indeed, there is something strangely revolting in the way in which a group that seems to belong to the house of Laius or of Pelops is introduced into the midst of the Brisks, Froths, Carelesses, and Plyants. The play was unfavourably received. Yet if the praise of distinguished men could compensate an author for the disapprobation of the multitude, Congreve had no reason to repine.

**The Two Plays for Lincoln's Inn**

In 1695 appeared *Love for Love*, superior both in wit and in scenic effect to either of preceding plays. It was performed at a new theatre which Betterton and some other actors, disgusted by the treatment which they had received in Drury Lane, had just opened in a tennis-court near Lincoln's Inn. Scarcely any comedy within the memory of the oldest man had been equally successful. The actors were so elated that they gave Congreve a share in their theatre, and he promised in return to furnish them with a play every year, if his health would permit. Two years passed, however, before he produced *The Mourning Bride*, a play which, paltry as it is when compared, we do not say, with Lear or Macbeth, but with the best

dramas of Massinger and Ford, stands very high among the tragedies of the age in which it was written. To find anything so good we must go twelve years back to *Venice Preserved*, or six years forward *The Fair Penitent*. The noble passage, which Johnson, both in writing and in conversation, extolled above any other in the English drama, has suffered greatly in the public estimation from the extravagance of his praise. Had he contented himself with saying that it was finer than anything in the tragedies of Dryden, Otway, Lee, Rowe, Southern, Hughes, and Addison than anything in short, that had been written for the stage since the days of Charles I, he would not have been in the wrong.

The success of *The Mourning Bride* was even greater than that of *Love for Love*. Congreve was now allowed to be the first tragic as well as the first comic dramatist of his time: and all this at twenty-seven. We believe that no English writer except Lord Byron has, at so early an age, stood so high in the estimation of his contemporaries.

**Collier's Censures**

In 1698, Collier published his *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*, a book which threw the whole literary world into commotion, but which is now much less read than it deserves. The faults of the work, indeed, are neither few nor small. The dissertations on the Greek and Latin drama do not at all help the argument, and, whatever may have been thought of them by the generation which fancied that Christ-Church had refuted Bentley, are such as, in the present day, a scholar of very humble pretensions may venture to pronounce boyish, or, rather, babyish. The censures are not sufficiently discriminating. The authors whom Collier accused had been guilty of such gross sins against decency that he was certain to weaken instead of strengthening his case by introducing into his charge against them any matter about which there could be the smallest dispute. He was, however, so injudicious as to place among the outrageous offences which he justly arraigned, some things which are really quite innocent, and some slight instances of levity which, though not strictly correct, could easily be paralleled from the works of writers who had rendered great services to morality and religion. Thus he blames Congreve, the number and gravity of whose real transgressions made it quite unnecessary to tax him with any that were not real, for using the words "martyr" and "inspiration" in a light sense; as if an archbishop might not say that a speech was inspired by claret, or that an alderman was a martyr to the gout.

**The Effect of the Short View**

The effect produced by the *Short View* was immense. The nation was on the side of Collier. But it could not be doubted that, in the great host which he had defied, some champion would be found to lift the gauntlet. The general belief was that Dryden would take the field; and all wits anticipated a sharp contest between two well-paired combatants. The great poet had been singled out in the most marked manner. It was well known that he was deeply hurt, that much smaller provocations had formerly

roused him to violent resentment, and that there was no literary weapon, offensive or defensive, of which he was not master. But his conscience smote him ; he stood abashed, like the fallen archangel at the rebuke of Zephon.

> "And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
> Virtue in her shape how lovely ; saw and pined
> His loss."

At a later period he mentioned the *Short View* in the preface to his *Fables*. He complained, with some asperity, of the harshness with which he had been treated, and urged some matters in mitigation. But, on the whole, he frankly acknowledged that he had been justly reproved. "If", said he, "Mr. Collier be my enemy, let him triumph. If he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance."

**Congreve's Reaction**

It would have been wise in Congreve to follow his master's example. He was precisely in that situation in which it is madness to attempt a vindication ; for his guilt was so clear that no address or eloquence could obtain an acquittal. On the other hand, there were in his case many extenuating circumstances which, if he had acknowledged his error and promised amendment, would have procured his pardon. The most rigid censor could not but make great allowances for the faults into which so young a man had been seduced by evil example, by the luxuriance of a vigorous fancy, and by the inebriating effect of popular applause. The esteem, as well as the admiration, of the public was still within his reach. He might easily have effaced all memory of his transgressions, and have shared with Addison the glory of showing that the most brilliant wit may be the ally of virtue. But in any case, prudence should have restrained him from encountering Collier. The non-juror was a man thoroughly fitted by nature, education, and habit for polemical dispute. Congreve's mind, though one of no common fertility and vigour, was of a different class. No man understood so well the art of polishing epigrams and repartees into the clearest effulgence, and setting them neatly in easy and familiar dialogue. In this sort of jewellery he attained to a mastery unprecedented and inimitable But he was altogether rude in the art of controversy ; and he had a cause to defend which scarcely any art could have rendered victorious.

The event was such as might have been foreseen. Congreve's answer was a complete failure. He was angry, obscure, and dull. Even the Green Room and Will's Coffee House were compelled to acknowledge that in wit as well as in argument, the parson had a decided advantage over the poet. Not only was Congreve unable to make any show of a case where he was in the wrong ; but he succeeded in putting himself completely in the wrong where he was in the right. Collier had taxed him with profaneness for calling a clergyman Mr. Prig and for introducing a coachman named Jehu, in allusion to the King of Israel who was known at a distance by his furious driving. Had there been nothing worse in *The Old*

*Bachelor* and *Double-Dealer*, Congreve might pass for as pure a writer as Cowper himself, who, in poems revised by so austere a censor as John Newton, calls a fox-hunting squire Nimrod and gives to a chaplain the disrespectful name of Smug. Congreve might with good effect have appealed to the public whether it might not be fairly presumed that, when such frivolous charges were made, there were no very serious charges to make. Instead of doing this, he pretended that he meant no allusion to the Bible by the name of Jehu and no reflection by the name of Prig. Strange, that a man of such parts should, in order to defend himself against imputations which nobody could regard as important, tell untruths which it was certain that nobody would believe.

### The Way of the World

This controversy probably prevented Congreve from fulfilling the engagements into which he had entered with the actors. It was not till 1700 that he produced *The Way of the World*, the most deeply meditated and the most brilliantly written of all his works. It wants, perhaps, the constant movement, the effervescence of animal spirits, which we find in *Love for Love*. But the historical rants of Lady Wishfort, the meeting of Witwoud and his brother, the country knight's courtship and his subsequent revel, and, above all, the chase and surrender of Millamant, are superior to anything that is to be found in the whole range of English comedy from the Civil War downwards. It is quite inexplicable to us that this play should have failed on the stage. Yet so it was; and the author, already sore with the wounds which Collier had inflicted was galled past endurance by this new stroke. He resolved never again to expose himself to the rudeness of a tasteless audience, and took leave of the theatre for ever.

### Left the Theatre in Disgust

He lived twenty-eight years longer without adding to the high literary reputation which he had attained. He read much while he retained his eyesight, and now and then wrote a short essay or an idle tale in verse, but appears never to have planned any considerable work. The miscellaneous pieces which he published in 1710 are of little value and have long been forgotten. The stock of fame which he had acquired by his comedies was sufficient, assisted by the graces of manner and conversation, to secure for him a high place in the estimation of the world. During the winter, he lived among the most distinguished and agreeable people in London. His summers were passed at the splendid countryseats of ministers and peers. Literary envy and political faction, which in that age respected nothing else, respected his repose. He professed to be one of the party of which his patron Montagu, now Lord Halifax, was the head. But he had civil words and small good offices for men of every shade of opinion. And men of every shade of opinion spoke well of him in return.

### Blindness

Infirmities of age came early upon him. His habits had been intemperate: he suffered much from gout; when confined to his

chamber, he had no longer the solace of literature. Blindness, the most cruel misfortune that can befall the lonely student, made his books useless to him. He was thrown on society for all his amusement : and, in society, his good breeding and vivacity made him always welcome.

**His Attachments**

Congreve was not a man of warm affections. Domestic ties he had none : and in the temporary connections which he formed with a succession of beauties from the green-room, his heart does not appear to have been interested. Of all his attachments, that to Mrs. Bracegirdle lasted the longest and was the most celebrated. This charming actress, who was, during many years, the idol of all London, whose face caused the fearful broil in which Mountfort fell, and for which Lord Mohun was tried by the Peers, and to whom the Earl of Scarsdale was said to have made honourable addresses, had conducted herself, in very trying circumstances, with extraordinary discretion. Congreve at length became her confidential friend. They constantly rode out together and dined together. Some people said that she was his mistress, and others that she would soon be his wife. He was at last drawn away from her by the influence of a wealthier and haughtier beauty. Henrietta, daughter of the great Marlborough and wife of the Earl of Gondolphin, had, on her father's death, succeeded to his dukedom and to the greater part of his immense property. Her husband was an insignificant man, of whom Lord Chesterfield said that he came to the House of Peers only to sleep, and that he might as well sleep on the right as on the left of the woolsack. Between the Duchess and Congreve sprang up a most eccentric friendship. He had a seat every day at her table, and assisted in the direction of her concerts. That malignant old hag, the Dowager Duchess Sarah, who had quarrelled with her daughter as she had quarrelled with everybody else, affected to suspect that there was something wrong. But the world in general appears to have thought that a great lady might, without any imputation on her character, pay attention to a man of eminent genius who was nearly sixty years old, who was still older in appearance and in constitution, who was confined to his chair by gout, and was unable to read from blindness.

**His Death**

In the summer of 1728, Congreve was ordered to try the Bath waters. During his excursion he was overturned in his chariot and received some severe internal injury, from which he never recovered. He came back to London in a dangerous state, complaining constantly of a pain in his side, and continued to sink till, in the following January, he expired.

# 2

# *The Restoration Drama*

**Return of Charles II**

The Restoration of the Stuart dynasty in 1660, after eighteen years of civil war and the Cromwellian regime, was not one of the major decisive events in English history. It did not solve any of the constitutional problems which had precipitated the war and which were finally settled only by the bloodless Revolution of 1688. Instead, the return of Charles II to England after his years of wandering on the Continent meant that the whole nation, worn out by the long period of dissension, and ill at ease over the chaos following the death of Cromwell in 1658, had begun to yearn for stability and over that they remembered from the days before the war. The national life swung sharply back into the tradition and patterns of the reign of Charles I. In the Church the Dissenters were removed and the formerly dispossessed Anglican bishops and preachers were returned to their charges. Parliament resumed its traditional character and functions. The court again set the tone for polite society, that small portion of the nation for whom most of the literature of the age was written. The Merry Monarch, though he made no pretense to being a model of the virtues, was admirable in polite manners, his ideal being, as he himself said, "to be easy oneself and to make everybody else so". And the "mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease" aimed at urbanity in their poetry as well as in their manners.

**Controversy Again**

No doubt the English people were at first sincerely happy over the restoration of Charles II. But the old difficulties soon reasserted themselves, and the political debate was resumed with regard to the constitutional limits of the royal prerogative. Even the old divisions were continued, between the Cavaliers and the Puritans,the Anglicans and the Dissenters, the aristocracy and the commercial classes, and these opposing groups were organized into the Tory and Whig parties in 1679, when the country again stood on the brink of civil war. Not one of the Stuart monarchs was able to preserve the unity of the English people ; and though Charles II had more shrewdness and practical sagacity than the rest, his financial extravagance and irresponsibility, as well as the flagrant immorality about his court, strained severely the loyalty of many of his subjects.

**Literature for the Selected Few**

The literature of the time reflects these conditions. It is full

of political prejudice and argument. As most of it was written for the fashionable world, it shares in the virtues and vices of that small segment of the English people. It does not tell us much about the soundness and wholesomeness of the rest of the national; for that we should have to go to such a work as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which immediately reached an immense sale among the Dissenters, but which had no important connection with the main literary movement of the time. Never in England since that time has literature belonged so exclusively to a limited class, the court and West End London.

**Emergence of Theatres**

More than any other form of literature, the theatre reflected the limitations of Restoration society. The only public the dramatist aimed to please was London, and only those people in London who either belonged to the fashionable world or tried to ape it. The middle class citizens, especially if they were of puritanical leanings, continued their traditional hostility to the theatre, and in the comedies of the time were only subjected to ridicule. The theatrical companies were licensed in 1660, under the direction of Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant, and patronized by the king and the Duke of York. These sufficed for all London, and indeed sometimes led a precarious existence. In 1682, when political excitement had seriously reduced the attendance at plays, the companies were obliged to merge. In 1696 a second company was again formed under the leadership of the famous actor Thomas Betterton. The theatre was then entering upon a more prosperous period, but only by making a definite appeal to the middle class with plays of a different taste.

**Influence of France**

The drama of the Restoration was not an importation from France, notwithstanding superficial resemblances. The fashionable world of London bowed readily enough to the authority of Parisian taste in questions of manners and dress, and aspired to French elegance. But even the English fashionable world remained English, and the drama which it whole-heartedly enjoyed would have been considered uncivilized in Paris. English playwrights frequently borrowed characters and incidents from the French, but the fine art and essential spirit of Corneille, Racine, and Moliere never crossed the English Channel. Both in comedy and tragedy the Restoration dramatists appealed to English taste and followed inherited English traditions choosing and adapting those who they found most congenial.

**Pepys' Diary**

They found little to please them in the romantic comedies of Shakespeare. Samuel Pepys, a good representative of the theater-goer of his day, thought *Twelfth Night* "but a silly play", and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life"; but the realistic and satirical comedy of Ben Jonson, the Classicist, whose authority was acknowledged by the whole age, invariably aroused Pepys' enthusiasm : *Bartholomew Fair*

is "a most admirable play", *The Alchemist* is "a most incomparable play", *The Silent Woman* is "the best comedy, I think, that ever was wrote", and so on through the *Diary*. The dramatist and critics admired Jonson's dramatic technique, for he had observed the so-called Aristotelian rule of the Three Unities, of time, place, and action, which in the seventeenth century weighed so heavily on the drama in all European countries. He was therefore the chosen master of the Restoration comic dramatists.

**Refinement in Art**

But they thought it necessary to refine even upon his art, and in the process they lost a great deal of his rugged and honest common sense. Even of Jonson's play Dryden could say that

> Wit's now arrived to a more high degree,
> Our native language more refin'd and free.
> Our ladies and our men now speak more wit,
> In conversation, than those poets writ.

In many respects this refinement had already been anticipated by dramatists of the era before the war: and the comedy of the Restoration fashionable world is but the constinuation of the world of such earlier disciple of Ben Jonson as James Shirley (1596-1666) and Richard Brome (1590-1652). Already under Charles I we can observe in it the characteristic Restoration prejudices against life in the country and against the merchant class in London; already comedies of manners were being written that exposed the new modes of social ambition to a cool satiric criticism, based on courtly good sense rather than on morality. The Restoration type of the fine gentleman was already in the making in England before the Civil War.

**The New Audiences**

The great strength of the Elizabethan dramatists was that they had to please an audience which ranged from the fringes of the court to the depths of the gutter. It was a strength because it compelled the playwright to try to achieve a short of universality, to show life in the round, to present a wide range of character and situation, to use the whole gamut of language at a time when English was a truly live and sinewy tongue, not the debased jargon of a population literate but without taste. Those whose temperament is classical, it should be said, will regard this rather as a weakness than a strength, for it did not permit the dramatist to concentrate, to refine, to limit precisely to an essential theme, after the manner of the great Greek tragedies.

**Private and Public Theatres of the Past**

Under James I and Charles I the audience gradually altered. First there was a split between the young intellectuals, the men-about-town, who would go to the 'private' theatres—those that were roofed and charged higher prices—and the rabble who went to roar at melodrama at the Red Bull. Then, under Charles I, there developed a closer connection between theatre and court. Charles's Queen was the first ever to go to a public theatre. The royal couple staged elaborate masques at their palaces, and acted in them. The Cavaliers began to patronize the theatre, and to demand the bright,

shallow, sensational tragi-comedy of which Beaumont and Fletcher were the masters. The middle classes, who had always been too busy about their trade to go very often to the theatre, now stayed away altogether : to them the place was unseemly and impious.

During rhe Commonwealth, the Puritans, long hostile to drama, tried to ban it altogether—not quite successfully, as we have seen. When the Court was restored, it at once returned to what had been a favourite amusement in earlier times. The middle classes were much slower to find their way back into the auditorium. Those who did come back usually preferred the Duke's, which was supposed to be the more respectable house.

If middle-class patrons were few, the rabble had almost vanished ; it could not afford a shilling to go into the pit, where a previous generation had stood for a penny.

**The New Theatres of the Aristocracy**

Thus the new theatres were patronized by a narrow range of folk : the King and Court ; the hangers-on of that Court, men seeking a reputation for fashion, trying to scrape up an acquaintance with the great ; men like Pepys, who went partly because he had a genuine love of the arts—he was keen on painting and music too—and partly because he liked to look at pretty girls, and buy them oranges and think himself a devil. Ladies, and not-quite-ladies, also went to the theatre, for business, pleasure or both.

The theatre then, like the opera-house today, was a place for the display of beauty, of jewels, of sumptuous dress : it was also, in that place of more formal social intercourse, a place of assignation. In a debased form—the galleries of certain famous music-halls were the recognized haunts of prostitutes—it has remained so within living memory.

The audience, then, was limited in type and taste. It was very small—when one theatre was filled by a successful play, the other often had not enough to pay for the expense of candles—and its members all knew one another well. They knew the actors, too. Whenever Pepys went to the theatre, he recognized many among the audience, and his well-known familiarity with actress has obscured the fact that he was also on speaking terms with actors. This was not so much an audience going to a play as we understand it, but rather a coterie, meeting in its accustomed club.

**Slow Decadence**

Witty, intelligent, idle, slightly scared—for bad times lay just behind them, and they never knew but that they might have to start on their travels again—they were bored : they played too high, drank too deep, talked too maliciously and too much, turned love into a polite, competitive sport (cricket had not been invented) and assumed tremendous arrogance towards anyone not of their breeding. Tales of aristocratic behaviour can often mislead. They did not see, in that country, such feudal fantasies as still survived in the France of the period—for example, the story of the Comte de Charolais, who happened to see a bourgeois taking the air in his nightcap as the Comte passed through a village ; he shot the man for fun, and was

formally pardoned because of his rank. But reading of Buckhurst and Sedley getting up to such indecent pranks at the windows of a public house that they were almost mobbed; or finding that D'Avenant's nose, a casualty to syphilis, was a popular topical joke; following the scandals of Lord Rochester—all this is to make ourselves a very incomplete picture, not only of the age, but of this part of the age.

The lascivious pictures and the Devil entering into him are incomplete without the other details—the omnivorous reading, the great poet who commended his satire, the farm-boy who was invited in with the others to hear his last confession. Similarly, it is not enough to think of Prince Rupert as a dashing cavalry officer who lost the war by taking the wrong turning at Naseby, or as a gallant whose syphilitic sores were so disgusting that they excited comment even in that age. We must also remember that his practical interest in science is commemorated in Prince Rupert's Drops, his concern with metallurgy has given us Prince Rupert's Metal; he was a ballistic expert, who invented the cravat, and devised and used a more efficient fireplace than the expensive, smoky caverns of the time.

These men, in fact, are endlessly surprising. Not the least surprising thing about them is the appalling plays they admired and the brilliant ones they demanded. Contemporary judgement, of course, is rarely the same as that of history. But these men were not blind; one of the most successful pieces of the period was Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, which mercilessly derides the absurdities of many of the popular plays.

3

# *The Restoration Comedy*

**The New Comedy**

A brilliant group of dramatists of the Age of Dryden made Restoration comedy a thing apart in English literature. The new comedy was of slower growth than the heroic play, and for some years after 1660, comedy was restricted to revivals of pre-Commonwealth plays, but the decadent, cynical spirit of the later age was alien to the romantic comedy of the Elizabethans. Even so, Restoration comedy drew its main inspiration from the native tradition which had flourished before the closing of the theatres in 1642. In particular it was indebted to Beaumont and Fletcher and to Ben Jonson. Like the heroic play, however, comedy was strongly influenced by Continental writers, and especially by Moliere and the Spaniard, Calderon. It reflected closely the dissolute court life of the period, and, between that and the court life of France, there was a community of spirit which led naturally to an interest in French comedy. Moliere provided English dramatists with ideas for plots and with an example of fine comic characterization ; Spanish drama served to strengthen that love of intrigue and incident already firmly established in English comedy. But here it is important to stress that foreign influences, while important, were not the predominant factors in the evolution of Restoration comedy. They blended with a tradition already strongly established, and assisted the natural process of change demanded by the changing temper of the age, but they were transformed into something essentially English and contemporary. Thus the comedy of Moliere was changed into a harder, more loosely knit form which lacked the warmth and depth of insight of the original.

**The Pervading Tone of the New Comedy**

The new drama is full of vitality, and moves with great pace, but the exhuberance which led the Elizabethans to the poetic romance is supplanted by a polish and intellectual control which replaces emotion by wit, and poetry by a clear, concise prose which adds much point and gives a fine precision to the dialogue. The pervading tone is one of cynicism, and the plays show a close, and often satirical, observation of life and manners which recalls the work of Ben Jonson. Plots and subplots are intricate and numerous, and centre mainly upon amorous intrigues, which reflect an open contempt for the ordinary standards of morality, that, in Wycherley and others, often takes the form of gross sensuality. In the hands of the best and

most restrained of the dramatists, Etherege and Congreve, the immorality still remains, but it is purged of much of its grossness and offensiveness by the fact that it is essentially intellectual, witty, and free from the cruder realism which mars Wycherley's work. The lack of passion and emotion in these plays gives them a polished, crystal hardness which saves them from the worst forms of licentiousness. The immorality of Restoration drama was the object of fierce Puritanical attacks, the most notorious of which was the *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) of Jeremy Collier (1650-1726). Though this work is notable only for its wrathful tone and its stapidity as dramatic criticism, it provoked many replies from the offending dramatists, but beyond this its objections seem to have had no effect.

**So-Called 'Licentious' Nature**

Since the year 1698, when Jeremy Collier flung his fulminations into the strongholds of the English drama, it has been the habit to tag Restoration Comedy with the epithet 'licentious'. Macaulay scrawled the word in flaming characters throughout a full-length essay ; and Lamb, in elaborating his nimble excuse, admitted the black indictment. What has happened that to-day, we can face without flinching the prospect of seeing a comedy by Wycherly, and that Congreve touches our emotions instead of seeming a monster of callousness ?

**Relations Between the Sexes**

The first thing to recognize is that Restoration comedy was not merely licentious, even if the adjunctive is useful in revealing that its chief subject is the intimate relations between men and women. It is a mistake to confuse subject with treatment ; one might as well say that *Vanity Fair*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Crime and Punishment* are licentious, because the characters in those books do not behave with the perfect propriety of the ladies in *Cranford*. The truth is—perhaps it was this that really shocked the moralists—that the comedy written from 1660 to 1700 dealt somewhat coldly with human love and lust, something cavalierly with the marriage tie. For there are, in the main, two attitudes one can take up in the face of man's inability to live up to his ideals : one that of amusement in the comic spirit, which implies that man's ideals need modification, or at least that his attitude towards them does ; the other that of horror, which implies that man himself needs modification—a task in which the risks of failure are discouraging.

The comic writers of that time took for subject the relations between the sexes not only because it lends itself so easily to jest (the earliest recorded laughter is on this subject) but because at that time it was one of crying imoortance. This was due to the fact not so much that society was lax, as that it was experimental. And this is perhaps why so much of this work seems to speak very directly to us, for it is the expression of people endeavouring to readjust their values after a great upheaval, trying to see themselves clearly, not as they might wish to be, or as a previous generation had said they ought to be, but as they really were. There is an extraordinary ring of

intellectual honesty about the comedy of this period, an attempt to get down to bed rock in these matters, which we find in the previous age only, perhaps, in Chapman fully, though we see it partially in Marston. It is the prominence of this subject and the manner in which it is treated, that makes Restoration comedy different from any other.

**Passion and Affection looked Differently**

But if the social assumptions of the previous age were broken down, Charles II's courtiers made others of their own, because without assumptions of some kind on every point society cannot exist at all. Being leisured, they were much preoccupied with love : being sceptical, their emotions were of the first importance to them, for when men's communings with God cease to matter intensely to him, his personal relations are bound to gain significance. They took as established that passion and affection were separate things and that it was foolish to confuse them ; they looked upon love as a purely personal reaction marriage as a social performance—and the writers of comedy dissected the resulting complications. Under the surface, of course, the normal life of social acceptance went on ; but what flared before the public eye was the behaviour of the Rochesters, Buckinghams, Killigrews, and, chiefest of all, that of 'the best good man that ever ruled a throne'. Licentiousness of course there was ; but it was rationalized, argued, made subject to scientific tests. And if the most brilliant and amusing statement of the experiment is given in Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode* ; the most profound and biting, and still more laughter-provoking in *Wycherley's Country Wife* ; the most graceful in Etherege's *She Would if She Could* ; in none of these cases is the result aphrodisiac. As regards licentiousness there is nothing in the whole dramatic literature of this period, not in Sedley, Otway, or Aphra Behn, that goes farther in this direction than certain scenes in *Pericles* or *Romeo and Juliet*.

# 4

# The Restoration Comic Writers

**William Congreve (1670—1729)**

First comedy was *The Old Bachelor* (1693), and this was followed by *The Double Dealer* (169 ), *Love for Love* (1695), and *The Way of the World* (1700). His one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride* (1697), was in the vein of the later Elizabethan tragedians.

Congreve is undoubtedly the greatest of the Restoration comedy writers. In his work the comedy of manners reaches perfection. His plays are a faithful reflection of the upper-class life of his day, but their undoubted immorality is saved from being objectionable by brilliant wit, a hard finish, and a total lack of realism. In the artificial society which he depicts, moral judgements would be out of place. The tone is one of cynical vivacity, the characters are well drawn, and Congreve's prose is lucid, concise, and pointed and shows an excellent ear for rhythm and cadence. In all things he is the polished artist, whose distinctive quality is brilliance.

All Congreve's plays, except *The Way of the World*, had an immediate success, and it is ironical that this one should be singled out by posterity as his masterpiece. Free from the occasional sentimental touches which mar *The Double Dealer*, it is the best examble of the comedy of manners, skilful in characterization, and completely free from the coarseness and realism which spoil the work of so many of his contemporaries.

**William Wycherley (1640-1715)**

The productive period of Wycherley's life was brief but fruitful. He produced four plays in five years: *Love in a Wood* (1671), *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672), *The Country-Wife* (1674), and *The Plain Dealer* (1676). He was a man of good family, and he was at Court, where he seems to have been no better than the average courtier of his time.

His contemporaries call his plays "manly". By this they probably refer to a boisterous indecency that riots through his comedies, in which nearly every person is a fool, and every clever man a rogue and a rake. He is much coarser in the grain than Congreve, and cannot keep his work at such a high level. Yet he shows much wit in handling dialogue, and has a sharp, though distorted, vision for human weaknesses.

**George Etherege (1635-91)**

Not much is known regarding the life of Etherege ; but he

appears to have been a courtier, and to have served abroad in the diplomatic service. His three plays are *The Comical Revenge*, or *Love in a Tub* (1664), *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* (1668), and *The Man of Mode*, or *Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676). They are important in that they established the comedy of manners, which was later to be perfected by Congreve. They paint a true picture of the graceful, heartless, and licentious upper classes of the period. The prose dialogue is natural and brilliant, and its light, airy grace conceals some deficiency of plot and construction.

**Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726)**

Vanbrugh's career, though much of it is obscure, seems to have been a varied one, for at different times he was a soldier, a herald, and an architect. His best three comedies are *The Relapse* (1696), *The Provok'd Wife* (1697), and *The Confederacy* (1705).

Vanbrugh's plays lack the art and elegance of Congreve's but they are full of energy and genial humour. He is fond of farce and good at caricature, and his plots, if daring, are soundly constructed.

**George Farquhar (1678-1707)**

He had an adventurous career, was in turn a clergyman, an actor, and a soldier, and died when he was twenty-nine years old. The pathos of his early death has given him a fame of its own. He wrote seven plays, the best of which are the last two, viz., *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707).

Farquhar comes late among the Restoration dramatists, and by his time the cynical immorality of the age seems to have worn thin. His temper is certainly more genial, and his wit, though it has lapses, is more decorous. In *The Recruiting Officer* and the plays which followed Farquhar added something new to Restoration comedy, in taking his material from a wider life than the polite ordinary people. His dialogue lacks the polish and sustained wit of Congreve. In his rapidly developing humanity, and his growing respect for moral standards, Farquhar looks forward to the drama of Steele and the succeeding age.

**Thomas Shadwell (1642-92)**

Little is known of Shadwell's life, and he has been remembered chiefly on account of Dryden's portrait of him in *Mac Fl cknoe.* He deserves mention here, however, in his own right. He held the popular stage for over twenty years and wrote many plays, the best of which were *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688) and *Bury Fair* (1689). Shadwell stood outside the development of the comedy of humours. His plays are generally coarse, but on occasion he shows real wit: his style lacks literary grace, out his plots are usually well constructed and show a fertile invention. He reflects, more accurately than anyone else, the everyday life of his time, and he has a keen satirical sense. He frequently deserts the level of the artificial, intellectual world of Congreve and, like Wycherley, stoops to a coarseness of passion that is repulsive. His later plays show a growing fondness for farce, and look forward to the sentimental drama.

# 5

# The Reputation of Restoration Comedy

### Reactions to Collier's Pamphlet

To Jeremy Collier's contemporary invectives against the "immorality and profaneness" of Restoration comedy, Congreve somewhat frivolously replied in his *Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations* (1698). Collier's attacks seem not to have affected Congreve's literary reputation in that circle of famous men of letters to which he belonged and in which he was highly esteemed. Among his contemporaries perhaps only a few Puritan critics and Congreve himself took exceptions to Dryden's claims that Heaven had endowed Shakespeare and Congreve equally.

Pope considered Congreve "one of the most valuable men as well as finest writers of my age and century." Addison ranked "harmonious Congreve" as Dryden's successor. Steele considered that Congreve excelled in every way of writing. He devoted a whole Spectator paper to condemning the corrupt morals of Ethertge in *The Man of Mode*, but seems never to have thought of Congreve as belonging to Etherege's school. Dennis, who attacked in venomous fashion most of the men of letters of the day, expressed only unbounded admiration for Congreve. Dennis observed aptly, "most person" thought, that Congreve "left the stage early, and comedy has quitted it with him".

### Johnson's Opinion

Nevertheless, the taste of theatregoers had changed, and sophisticated comedy of manners was increasing subjected to charges of heartlessness and immorality. It is not surprising that Samuel Johnson, the great moral arbiter of his age, felt compelled to decree, as he summed up Congreve's achievement, that "the general tenour and tendency of his plays must always be condemned. It is acknowledged with universal conviction that the perusal of his works will make no man better; and that their ultimate effect is to represent pleasure in alliance with vice, and to relax those obligations by which life ought to be regulated." Yet even Johnson reflected: "Among all the efforts of early genius which literary history records, I doubt whether any one can be produced that more surpasses the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve." And "one of the best" of Johnson's "little Lives" concludes with the tribute: "While comedy or while tragedy is regarded Congreve's plays are likely to be read."

**The Romantic Critics**

The romantic critics of the nineteenth century took a cautious delight in Restoration comedy, which they found curiously remote from the life of their own era. Lamb chose to envisage the world of Restoration society as released from all laws of time and space, a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is, a fairy country "beyond the diocease of the strict conscience." Hazlitt was more aware of the historical importance of dramatists who commemorated a gala day of wit and pleasure, among whom he regarded Congreve as by far the wittiest and most elegant. Leigh Hunt urged that intelligent comprehension of the manners of an earlier period should stimulate, rather than dismay, all minds "candidly and healthily trained."

**Victorian Reaction**

Victorian moral earnestness supplanted this more gracious approach to Restoration comedy. Macaulay eloquently disparaded the "exceedingly bad" morality of a *beau monde* that he found a great deal too real in everything ridiculous and degrading. George Meredith, in the very act of assailing the unlovely English propensity for moralistic judgments, heartily decried the so-called comedy of manners as manners of South-sea islanders under city veneer; and, as to comic idea, "vacuous as the mask without the face behind it." *The Way of the World* indeed, Meredith praised as an exceptional achievement, refusing to recognize that play as a very example of the mode which he condemned

**Revival in the Present Century**

In the twentieth century there has been a vigorous revival of interest in Restoration comedy. Critics have taken a fresh look at the Restoration tradition, and Congreve has had his rightful share in that reappraisal. In his admirable and definitive biography, ***William Congreve, the Man*** (1941), John Hodges demolished Gosse's dull image of Congreve as a man who went through life "as if in felt slippers" and Voltaire's distorted image of Congreve as an elegant trifler. No longer encumbered by moral blinkers, a fair number of modern scholars have dedicated themselves to the rewarding task, initiated by John Palmer, of exploring "a mood of the human spirit which is in every age, though in this particular age it was more conspicuous." Foremost among these scholars has the humane and gifted English critic Bonamy Dobree, whose essays on Restoration comedy have been distinguished by a brilliance of style worthy of the subject.

# 6

# *Comedy of Manners and Comedy of Humours*

**Jonson's Comedy of Humour**

Ben Jonson, a learned man who never let anyone forget it, modelled his comedies on a strict pattern, and produced what is called the 'comedy of humours." 'Humour' is an old medical word, meaning a body-fluid, and also the type of temperament that was supposed to go with it. Words such as 'sanguine' and 'choleric' survive to remind us of this. A 'humorous man'—Hamlet uses the phrase—in a theatrical company was what we should now call a character-actor : one who specializes in, let us say, crusty colonels, doting swains, silly asses or dotty inventors, parts which are all of a colour, unsubtle, instantly recognized by the most unsophisticated. Jonson's comedy sets out, in the true classical manner, to show us the vices and follies of ordinary men, and does so by presenting characters, each of whom has a particular quirk of temperament—jealousy, quick-temper, gullibility, or whatever. The plot rests on the interaction of these temperamental characters. Such comedy will always have some appeal, because many of these temperaments are common to all ages ; but Jonson naturally portrayed his types in the dress of his times, so that one of the best ways of familiarizing ourselves with the life, especially the low life, of Jonson's period is to read *The Alchemist* or *Bartholomew Fair*. He was not getting out to portray society but to show what is eternally foolish in man.

**Fletcher's Comedy**

His popular contemporary, Fletcher, had a less serious aim. He was perfecting the 'comedy of intrigue'. Fletcher was more gentlemanly than Jonson, less learned, or less aware of it, more cynical about his own profession He had little idea of comedy as a means to satirize, criticize, reform mankind. He wanted to entertain. His characters are simple, two-dimensional creatures, good ones and silly ones. The interest lies in a highly involved plot in which disguises are worn, letters miscarry, deceptions are practised, and, after many false turns, all ends well.

These are not the only kinds of comedy to be found in pre-Commonwealth drama. There was a lot of stuff so mixed that it cannot be labelled clearly. And there was that other comedy—if comedy is the right word for it—which seems to have its being in a

different dimensions, the comedy which includes such strange and bitter stuff as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, and Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case*.

In the Restoration theatre, the comedies of humour and intrigue were both popular, and Jonson and Fletcher were still often acted, and imitated too. Authors like Shadwell and Howard were plainly following these earlier masters. Tragi-comedy, a form attributed to the famous partnership of Beaumont and Fletcher, was still being written. Nahum Tate patched up *King Lear*, with a happy ending. But in the midst of this there arose a distinctive kind of play, whose invention is usually credited to Etherege, called the 'comedy of manners'. It is for this comedy, and its near relations, that the drama of the age is chiefly remembered.

**The Comedy of Manners**

It is remembered especially because it is very rude, or supposed to be. So many strange attitudes have been struck over its indelicacy that it is as well to try to determine our own position at once. First of all, however naughty the jokes may be, they are no naughtier than those that every schoolboy has heard by the time he is fairly into his teens. Compared with what we may find in the work of modern dramatists, such as Genet, Antrobus, Osborne, they are almost mealy-mouthed. And they are not all naughty, anyway— two of the most enjoyable plays, *The Beaux' Stratagem* and *The Way of the World*, would scarcely raise a blush in a convent.

**Saintsbury and Others on Restoration Comedy**

In the last century, a perceptive critic, George Saintsbury, relegated the whole matter to a footnote: 'I have not thought it necessary to waste space in dwelling on this feature of Dryden's plays....... it was a way of the then world, and it is a long time ago; no more need be said about it.' A scholar of our own day, to whom every student of drama owes a debt. Professor Allardyce Nicoll, has written that some of the humour of these plays can appeal only to the deliberate lover of pornography. Professor Bonamy Dobree, whose introduction to the comedy and tragedy of the Restoration is probably unsurpassed after thirty years produces a brilliant apologia. In a closely-reasoned argument, he attributes this feature of the plays to the scientific, clinical spirit of enquiry and curiosity which characterized the times. What he calls the sex-war fascinated those who played it, and the jokes which they made about it are part of an attempt to face honestly its implications.

Most men will react in one of three fairly clearly-defined ways to rude humour. Some are repelled and embarrassed by coarseness of any kind, some laugh at anything which is the slightest bit improper : both of these are suffering from the same thing—like the teetotaller and the drunk, they are both extremists. The majority of men who have a sense of humour at all will laugh at a joke, when it is absurd or subtle, whether its subject is improper or not. So it may be assumed that the reader of to-day belongs to the majority, and that he will find passages in these plays which are as amusing as they are indelicate. Where the material is badly hand-

led, he will be rightly disgusted. Where a dramatist of obvious skill and sincerity—Wycherley is the obvious example—seems to harp too much upon this one string, he may seek, as Professor Dobree has done, for some serious purpose behind the bawdry.

This matter has been raised, not only because so many writers of the past have avoided or misrepresented it, but because it is central to so many of the plays : the relations of lovers, husbands and mistresses are the essence of the plot.

**London Society Depicted**

The typical comedy of manners, then, shows us a fairly narrow range of society, which nearly always means London society. Citizens, aldermen, soldiers, clergymen, the occasional doctor may appear in the background ; the foreground is occupied by Beaux and fops and rakes, flirtatious, giddy girls, naughty married ladies just getting their second wind, testy old husbands, as jealous as they are impotent. And there is often a rich subsoil of low life, bawds and procuresses, midwives, ne'er-do-wells. The story is slight, but often complicated—seductions, lost reputations, a duel, a disguise, some knockabout. What saves the play is most often its language. Always crisp and sparkling, always sayable—though the modern actor has to learn a special delivery for it—a lucid, perfect instrument for the brittle wit, the sharp, cynical observation of life and love that is the unique artistic contribution of the era. We recognize the humours, the intrigues, the downright farce, descendants of an earlier age ; but the special sort of wit in which the dialogue abounds is new.

**A Single Aim**

The aim of this comedy, if there is a single aim, is to show the manners of the upper ranks of contemporary society. They are shown with unemotional candour. The heroes have feet of clay, the prettiest women are wanton and mercenary, the aged are pitilessly duped, the most serious topics—religion, philosophy, fidelity—are mentioned only to be mocked. This is where the problem of interpreting their values becomes so important, and proves so difficult, at least as far back as the time of Charles Lamb, one school of thought has suggested that the characters and their behaviour are so intellectualized as that we never take them seriously at all. Although we are enjoying the performance, we never really think that any thing nasty is going to happen in the woodshed so there is no offence in the play. As an example of this, one might cite *The Chances*, originally the work of Fletcher but rewritten for the Restoration stage by the notorious and witty Buckingham.

**Comparisons**

There is, of course a difference in kind between the work of the two periods: the names Comedy of Humours and Comedy of Manners themselves indicate this; but there is no rigid dividing line, and the difference is only very obvious at the extremes. The Comedy of Manners also took types, human qualities, and worried them into all sorts of distortions, as the names Sir Fopling Flutter, Sir Positive At-A., Horner, Lady Fancyful, Mrs. Marwood are enough to show;

indeed, Congreve was the one writer of his period to subtilize the 'humour' into a person. But the names, it will be noticed, are slightly different; the qualities taken are more superficial less separated, than those of Volpone or Sir Giles Overreach. For the Restoration writers were far more realistic; they drew their characters, copied their situations, from the life they saw around them; they were much less abstract. They were concerned to bring things to earth, to test them by immediate actuality; they had none of the metaphysical background of the Elizabethans. Their comedy, therefore, is lighter, racier, more spinning; the action is brisker, the working sharper and more epigrammatic. Their wit sometimes became wearisome, but it had its points, which was the 'acquired follies' of man, not his deep characteristics: their criticism was from a social angle, not from a humanitarian one.

**Critical Comedy**

For Restoration comedy was, with the exception of Etherege's work, what is known as critical comedy; it tried to 'cure excess,' to find the happy means by laughing exaggeration out of court and vice out of countenance. This is in itself a limitation, for the greatest minds do not want to change anything ; Shakespeare wanted to alter Falstaff about as much as Bardolph did; and if Moliere held Arnolphe up to scorn, one feels he understood Tartufe to be a necessary ingredient in the general make up of the world. It is true that Wycherley in one play, and Congreve in another, achieved this more divine comedy, and we need not blame the rest for not succeeding in something they were not trying to do. Rather we have every reason to be grateful for the restraint which kept them making something they could make supremely well and amusingly, for the result is a gallery of entertaining, and partly immortal types, involved in situations which never cease to divert mankind. The Restoration comedy writers, with their keen observation, their quick, even too facile. deductions from externals, their capacity for seizing character from a gesture, keep us dancing along to a gay tune that is often irresistible. The fop, the idler, the preposterous man of importance ; the philanderer, his feminine counterpart, the sham scientist, the astrologer; the town elegant. the country clod people, the seaman and the professional man ; the Spanish knot, and the fanatic's robe—all conspire to leave the busy world and appear before us on the stage in a lively medley of action. with robust outpouring of words.

# 7

# *Congreve's Contribution to the Restoration Drama*

**A Descendant from the Past**

Congreve is not wholly of the type of Restoration dramatist; he is in some sort the descendant of Etherege and Wycherley; he is more mature. But the material he used for his comedies hardly differs from that of his companions. Like theirs, his people are the men and women who talked in the boudoirs and coffee houses of King William's reign and took their exercise in the Park, the Piazza, or the Mall. They may be met in the comedies of Crowne, Shadwell, and Dryden, in the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys, even in the letters of Dorothy Osborne. They were not very different from ourselves. Superficially their conversation seems different because the idiom has changed; we no longer rail, or hunt elusive simile to the death but were the Petulants, the Carelesses, the Belindas, and the Brisks to appear at our own dinner tables, we should find them natural enough. They would, with just the same zest as ourselves, use the discoveries of Dr. Freud pleasurably to widen the limits of gossip, and charitably to interpret the failings of our friends.

**The Difference**

But part of the material an artist has at his disposal is the philosophic make up, and here Congreve differs from his contemporaries. Not much, for his was not a profoundly original mind; he had no new orientation to declare, no revelation to make, wherewith to stir the people of his day to revision. But he differed in two points. His intellectual fastidiousness made him loath to portray 'fools so gross, that they should rather disturb than divert the well-natured and reflecting part of an audience': and secondly, his passionate sense rebelled against the rationalization of love. The attempt had proved a failure, and Congreve, born somewhat late in the day, could only feel the disillusion of peace while missing the joy of battle.

But more important than the material of an artist is the use he makes of it; how else could we distinguish between Jonson and Brome, between Etherege's hack work, and the turgid periods of Crowne ? By this is shown in a writer's sensibility, his affective wealth; in this alone artistic creation makes so close the fusion of mind with sensibility, that thought merges into feeling.

**Congreve's own Style**

To achieve a style argues a passionate nature: it cannot be coldly constructed or artificially put together; for passion means not the noisy tearing of the heart to tatters, but the deep rooted impulse which drives a man to labour continually in the same road. And here we hit the amazing paradox about Congreve—that not even in spite of, but actually because of his style, which almost without a gap gives evidence of exquisite feeling, he is accused of being cold, heartless, wicked. Some have seen in him nothing but a social snob, and have entered his works in the stud book as being by Pride out of Urbanity. The reason may be that endowed with a passionate and selective nature—in this, but for fear of exaggeration, one would like to compare him with Racine—an element of physical weakness prevented its full realization either in life or in literature. Under such conditions the mind turns ever inward upon itself, continually discerning and refining dwelling upon possibilities of relationship, making ramifications of increasing subtlety. We see this carried to its farthest point in Proust. This would account for the strong element of wistfulness in Congreve's work, that constant fear of disillusion, that 'against fruition' note, we find so often on the lips of his women, of Cynthia, Angelica, and Millamant. Yet because Congreve was not a sentimentalist, he applied his clear, strong mind, his discerning, if not very wide or deep imagination, to his emotions, he never deluded himself. Thus he made every effort to be dry, and his last comedy, though based on sentiment rather than on the 'humours', is far from sentimental. This is not by any means to say that it is heartless.

**A 'Pure' Creator**

In discussing Congreve, then, it must be insisted that he belongs to the type of 'pure' creator, who is to be judged solely on aesthetic grounds, that is, by the quality of delight which he imparts. He and Dickens are not to be measured by the same instrument, any more than Dostoievsky and Miss Austen, in spite of the elements they may possess in Common. It is, when all is said, the province of art to delight the spirit, and it is, finally, the aesthetic pleasure we get from Congreve that earns him his high place. It is on that plane, and not on the moral or philosophic, that he has something to give.'

# 8

# *Modern Reaction to the Comedy of Manners*

**First Signs of Change**

Between 1840 and the end of the nineteenth century, the predominant attitude to the Restoration dramatists was that of Macaulay. The first signs of a change were the publication of the Mermaid editions of Dryden, Wycherley, Otway, Shadwell, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar,—although some of the editors showed a good deal of uneasiness on the moral question, and although Congreve and Wycherley were prefixed with Macaulay's hostile criticisms—and Meredith's *Essay on Comedy*. Meredith did a service in placing Congreve in the line of critical comedy, even if he made the mistake of Lamb, Hunt and Macaulay of stressing the heartlessness of the characters in the comedies of the period.

**Revival after the First World War**

John Palmer's pioneering book, *The Comedy of Manners* (1913), prepared the way for the rehabilitation of the genre, and revivals of the plays in the threatre, after the First World War. These would not have been possible without the violent reaction against Victorian prudery both in the theatre and outside it.

During the years when Nigel Playfair was reviving *The Way of the World*, *The Old Bachelor*, *The Beaux Stratagem* and *The Beggar's Opera*, a number of editions of the major dramatists, and several books on their comedies, were published. These included *Restoration Comedy* by Bonamy Dobree (1924), *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration* by Joseph Wood Krutch (1924) and *The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy* by Kathleen M. Lynch (1924). These books sought to place the comedy in relation to the social background, and to trace its ancestry. Dobree argued that the distinguishing characteristic of Restoration comedy down to Congreve is that it is concerned with the attempt to rationalise sexual relationships ; he also analysed the musical subtleties of Congreve's prose. By the beginning of the thirties the comedy of manners had recovered the critical reputation and the popularity it had not had for more than two centuries, and in 1937 Virginia Woolf wrote the most eloquent eulogy of Congreve.

**L.C. Knights' attack**

In the same year, the reaction set in when L.C. Knights

published a damning indictment of the comedy of manners in *Scrutiny*. He complained of the mechanical and monotonous nature of Congreve's prose, of the absence in the comedies of the period of the values found in them by Professor Dobree and Miss Lynch, of the fact that 'in the matter of sexual relations Restoration comedy is entirely dominated by a narrow set of conventions, of the lack of genuine sexual feelings, of Millamant's lack of intelligence, and of the superficial cynicism which is everywhere apparent. He concludes with the ringing statement that 'the criticism that defenders of Restoration comedy need to answer is not that the comedies are immoral, but that they are trivial, gross and dull.'

Professor Knights' final challenge seems very odd. How can the Juvenalian savagery of Wycherley be regarded as trivial? How can the most civilised of all English dramatists be regarded as gross? How can anyone regard *The Country Wife* or *Love for Love* as dull? Knights is such a fine critic that one is driven to seek for some explanation when he shows imperfect sympathies. It may partly be that Bloomsbury's praise of Congreve was regarded as an indication of this superficiality; and though Knights does not discuss the moral issue one suspects that his general disdain and disgust for Restoration comedy is ultimately a matter of morals. He has more in common with Collier and Macaulay than he is aware of.

**John Wain's Essays**

John Wain in one of his *Preliminary Essays* (1957)—part of which had appeared in *Essays in Criticism*—referred to Knight's diatribe as the best treatment of the subject. His own view is scarcely more flattering, except that he seems to approve of *The Man of Mode* for its truth to life. He, like Knights, thinks that Congreve's prose has been overpraised, that Wycherley never achieved clarity on any basic issue, and that the only enjoyable parts of the plays are when the dramatists 'are writing speeches for their grotesques to utter'. Mr. Wain's determination not to be impressed by Restoration comedy can best be seen in his remarks on Congreve's prose style:

"Congreve had a good ear for idiosyncracies of speech, and knew how to write sentences that are short and rhythmical and sound well when spoken from the stage, but so did the author of Charley's Aunt."

If Mr. Wain really thought that this does justice to Congreve's style, we should wonder whether he ought to discuss dramatic dialogue at all. But he is, presumably, merely expressing his irritation with Dobree's curious over praise of Congreve in terms of Cadences, rhythmical balance and what-not!

It is unfortunate that Mr. Wain thinks it necessary to be so partisan for his essay opens with some interesting remarks about the relation of Restoration comedy to the age in which it was written: that it reflects class interests, that it is one of the symptoms of a sick society that it is part of the literature of the Civil War: it has all the animosity of the battlefield in its heart.

**Bateson's Reply**

This last point is taken up by F.W. Bateson in a reply to L.C.

Knights (*Essays in Criticism*, 1957) when he writes :

"The relative sexual respectability of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* was the end-product of a long process that was closely connected with political developments. If the political problem par excellence in the second half of the seventeenth century was to avoid the recurrence of a second Civil War, its social parallel essentially, was to rationalise the sex instinct. Until such a rationalisation has been achieved genuine communication between Whigs and Tories was hardly possible. Inter-marriage, the final solution, was unthinkable. It is now a matter of history that a kind of sexual rationalisation was achieved...From one point of view, in the mode of allegory proper to high comedy, the Restoration drama records the strains that accompanied the achievement."

**In Defence of Comedy of Manners**

The idea that the comedy was concerned with the rationalisation of the sex instinct goes back to Dobree. Certainly—despite Knights' view that it is entirely cerebral—it is the only branch of English comedy which is almost exclusively concerned with sexual relations, in and out of marriage. But it is important to stress that the dramatists reflected the manners and modes of society, as well as sought to alter them. Etherege is more or less contented with the existing situation ; Dryden is tolerantly amused at it ; and Wycherley lashes the crying age. By the time we get to Congreve—and to the reign of William and Mary—it was possible to make more subtle comments of love and marriage.

It is along such lines as these that the best comedies of the period may be defended from the charge of triviality, for the relationship of the sexes is the acid test of a civilisation :

"The immediate, natural and necessary relation of one human being to another is that of man to woman. From the character of this relationship it can be seen how far man has developed. The relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of one person to another : in it is revealed how far the natural behaviour of man has become human—how far his human nature has become for him real nature. In this relationship, too, is revealed how far the needs of man has become human needs, that is to say, how far another person has become of his needs as a human being—how far existence has become mutual being."

In the light of these remarks by the young philosopher, Karl Marx, the years following in Restoration would have to be condemned as uncivilised. Woman to the gallant, both on and off the stage, was merely a sexual prey ; and that the woman was likewise predatory, or at least a willing victim, does not make the relationship any more satisfactory. In this respect the puritans were more civilised than many of their opponents. But by the end of the period, whether because of middle-class pressure, or exhaustion, or rationality, there was a marked improvement : and this improvement was reflected in the comedies of Congreve, who was the most sensitive of the dramatists, in whose plays the heroines were moral beings and not merely sexual objects.

9

# *Congreve's Plots*

**Stress on the Three Unities**

Congreve's highest excellences are not seen in his plots, although he pays more attention to the three unities than his contemporaries did. In the important unity of action this statement is perhaps contradicted by his first play, *The Old Bachelor* (1693), while like Etherege's *Comical Revenge* involves a series of intrigues on different social levels. Neatly blended with the one that gives the play its name is the gulling of Sir Joseph Wittol (a fool who has offended Vainlove) by marrying him to a common woman after Heartwell, the old bachelor and misogynist, has hardly been saved from her charms. Meanwhile Bellamour, in love with Bellinda, takes time off to disguise himself as the fanatic preacher Tribulation Spintext and thus to cuckold the Puritan banker Fondlewife. Vainlove has a relatively easy time in winning the one honourable woman in the cast, Araminta. The play was an enormous success, and the reputation of the young playwright seemed assured. Later in the same year, however, his second play, *The Double Dealer* (1963), failed. This failure is hardly accountable. The plot is far more unified, being merely the struggle of Mellefont against the jealous Lady Touchwood and the Iago-like Maskwell to win his charming Cynthia. There are thrilling episodes, but no divergent intrigues as in the first play. The darkness of the villainy makes the play hardly more than tragicomic, and possibly this fact explains its cool reception.

**Congreve's Best in the Later Plays**

*Love for Love* (April, 1695) was long the most popular of Congreve's plays. The plot here tells how Valentine, at odds with a critical father, is likely to lose his estate to a seagoing younger brother and thus miss getting his beloved heiress, Angelica. The intrigue is deftly suspensive, turning largely on the ultimate triumph of the intelligent younger couple over a star crazed uncle and an unnatural father, with, in the last act, a masked marriage that tricks the fop Tattle into wedding the blemished Mrs. Frail instead of the expected Angelica. This plot is, in comic effect, Congreve's best. In *The Way of the World* (1700), his best comedy, he had an excellent plot but treated it negligently : he had too much love of topical conversation to waste time in telling the story of how Mirabell evades the malicious plotting of Lady Wishfort, Mrs. Marwood, and her lover Fainall, and persuades all but charming Millamant to marry him. Obviously all these plots are conventional: we

have a comedy, not of love, but of the love chase. Financial reverses, irate fathers, jealous cast mistresses (particularly coquettish aunts of the pursued lady), are the chief obstacles to success, and legal documents, signed or unsigned, disguisings, and masked marriages that involved mistaken identities, are frequent episodes. It is the same old deck of cards, but Congreve does clever tricks with them.

On the plot of *The Way of the World*, Kenneth Muir observes, "Congreve's last and best play, was not so immediately successful as *Love for Love*, and it is not difficult to see why. The first act is slow, and there is a great discussion of characters we do not meet until later in the play, Millamant not appearing until middle of Act II and Lady Wishfort, who provides the broadest comedy, until the third act. Some allusions in the opening scenes are likely to be obscure or even misleading at a first hearing. When Mirabell, for example, hints that Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress, an audience would have to be very quick on the uptake to take the hint :

> You pursue the argument with a distrust that seems to be unaffected, and confess you are conscious of a concern for which the Lady is more indebred to you, than is your wife.

It would be possible for an audience to gather in Act I that Mirabell's uncle was an impostor, and that he was to court Lady Wishfort rather than Millamant. But such difficulties do not arise after a first hearing, and may indeed give ironical under-tones to the dialogue."

# 10

# *Congreve's Style*

**Vivacity of Language**

Congreve's characters are best revealed in the vivacity of their language. Even the fools contribute to the conquest of dullness. It has been objected that the false wits "are permitted to stumble on too many brilliant." Witwoud's head would be empty if it were not well stocked with similitudes. He is almost breathless in his haste to get them out and is never in better form than when others consent to play the similitude game with him. His flow of similitudes suits his character, as Petulant's snappishness suits his. Lady Wishfort's "boudoir Billingsgate" is a superb invention. Even the servants have their special accents. Foible sweetens impudence with flattery, and Mincing struggles to be genteel.

Millamant's whimsical manner of speech is always unmistakably hers alone. Her very flippancies are charged with meaning. It is plain that her excessive gaiety is forced. She talks very fast and is afraid of pauses, fearful lest the realities of love may somehow rudely intrude upon the pretty decorum of the *beau monde*. In those inarticulate silences, charged with warmth and colour, that check now and again the flashing current of her railery, Millamant seems wistfully pleading with Mirabell to accept her love without the shame of a confession and to permit her to remain in appearance imperious, brilliant, heartless, the finest of fine ladies.

**Matchless Prose**

There has always been unanimity of opinion regarding Congreve's style and particularly regarding its excellence in *The Way of the World*. Hazlitt considered that Congreve attained "the highest model of comic dialogue" and that "there is a peculiar flavour in his very words, which is to be found in hardly any other writer". Dobree has noted that the melody occasionally heard in *The Double Dealer* and more often in *Love for Love* is pervasive in *The Way of the World*. In Congreve's last comedy a way of life is recorded in matchless prose, with never a false note to mar the interpretation.

**To the Pinnacle of Literary Fame**

There can hardly be another instance to put beside Congreve of a man who sprang so immediatly to the pinnacle of literary fame for his style, and, if we make due allowance for the natural exaggeration of his contemporaries, has ever since maintained his position

so inalienably It is true that no one to-day would attempt to rank him with Shakespeare, as Dryden did in the well-known lines ;

> Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,
> To Shakespeare gave as much ; she could not
> give him more

but compared with others, who have been likened to our eternal poet, Congreve has held his place with reasonable stability. The critics of the early nineteenth century were loud in his praises ; Lamb gave him his full due, and even Macaulay could not withhold his admiration. Only Leigh Hunt tempered his enthusiasm, perhaps merely to balance Hazlitt's fine tribute. *The Way of the World* the latter wrote, "is an essence almost too fine, and the sense of pleasure evaporates in an aspiration after something that seems too exquisite ever to have been realized." This is the true note, struck by Hazlitt with his faculty of seeing more clearly than any of his contemporaries, and of seeing things separately. He was the first, apart from the men of Congreve's day, to realize him as a poet, with a poet's longing for beauty. Other critics have failed to see that the masterly style accomplishes something other than a clear exposition of manners. So Coleridge wrote, "Wickedness is no subject for comedy. This was Congreve's great error and peculiar to him. The dramatic personalities of Dryden, Wycherley, and others are often viciously indecent, but not like Congreve's wicked." Again, Leigh Hunt remarked, "We see nothing but a set of heartless fine ladies and gentlemen coming in and going out, saying witty things at each other, and buzzing in some maze of intrigue." To Mr. Gosse, the exquisite wording reveals no more than satire, and a "careless superiority." Congreve's brilliance, indeed, is so dazzling that admiration nearly always stops short at praising it, and fails to perceive the real force of the man, the solid personality, and the knowledge of human beings. So Macaulay of his epigram : "In this sort of jewelry he attained to a mastery unprecedented and inimitable," and Henley—"He is saved from oblivion by the sheer strength of style." Meredith's famous passage is in the same vein : "He hits the mean of a fine style and a natural in dialogue. He is at once precise and voluble. In this he is a classic, and is worthy of treading a measure with Moliere." Mr. Whibley praises him for economy, as "a stern castigator of prose." "In point and concision, his style is still unmatched in the literature of England. There is never a word too much, or an epithet that is superfluous."

## His Last Play

The style of his last play is beautifully varied, and the voices are all distinct : the 'boudoir Billingsgate' of Lady Wishfort as she cures Foible ; the endearing earthiness of Sir Wilful, which is 'Rustik—rather than Gothick' compared with Millamant's preciosity; the elaborate pretences of Marwood and Mrs. Fainall as they try to read each other's hearts ; the malicious exchanges of Marwood and Millamant : the bitterness of Marwood when alone. Best of all perhaps, are the scenes following Millamant's first triumphant entrance in which every character—Mirabell, Witwoud, Mrs. Fainall,

Mincing and Millamant herself—is superbly alive, and in which the grave meditations of Mirabell on "Beauty the lover's gift" contrast brilliantly with Millamant's calculated affectations and Witwoud's breathless similitudes. These scenes represent the high-water mark of the comedy of manners, as perfect in their kind as those of Rosalind in Arden or Viola in Illyria

**Conclusion**

These praises are abundantly warranted, but too great an attention to style in this sense is apt to obscure the broader vision A brilliant technique, of which verbal style is a part, is developed through the impulsion to express something, and it is in relation to this that style must be considered. If we read Congreve sympathetically we must admit that a comedy for him was not a mere game, but like every other good piece of writing. "the precious life blood of a master spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." Congreve, indeed, had rather more to say than the mode he chose for speech would allow him ; and one may suspect that it was the realization of this, combined with the failure of *The Way of the World*, that made him abandon the stage at the age of thirty.

# 11

# *An Estimate of Congreve*

**A Reformer of the Stage**

William Congreve was definitely among the unregenerat Doubtless he wa shocked and annoyed to find his work rather ii eptly attacked by Collier. Congreve regarded himself as a reform of the stage ; and that he was so regarded by others is evident fro the fact that he (with Vanbrugh, another sinner) was chosen to dire the new theatre in the Haymarket, which was opened in 1705 an was supposedly devoted to theatrical uplift. Early in his care Congreve had been praised by Dryden and Southerne, who helpe get his first play produced, and by Addison, Swift. and doubtle many others. But his reform was concerned with the technique drama—its wit, its structure, its dialogue. Perhaps because he b came aware that his sort of reform did not catch on, perhaps becau he did not care to compete with less genteel, less acute playwright he ceased from writing for the stage at the age of thirty. His pr faces, as well as Swift's rimed epistle to him, indicate that Congre felt superior to his audiences. Far be it from him to cut block wi a razor ! So he became an elegant minor poet, a gouty man abo town, and the gallant of a wealthy duchess. If there was somethi of the snob in Congreve, he was still an amiable snob, one of t best liked of literary men during a period of nearly forty years (169 1729), in which very few wits were generally beloved

**Unmasking of Follies**

Clearly Congreve was a formalist, a technician, a man of arti tic rather than moral conscience. He learned much from su predecessor as Etherege, Wycherley, Shadwell, and Moliere. Th his characters were subtler than Etherege's can be seen by compa ing his gentlemen, Vainlove and Mirabell, with the celebrated Dor mant. Congreve's heroes do not love a quarrel with a cast mistres do not condescend to berate their servants, and are not vain of the inconstancy in love—though they are inconstant. He has, agai none of Wycherley's vehemance, and yet the actions of his play especially of the *Double Dealer*, are far from being inherently comi "'Tis but the way of the world" might have been said of his soph cated characters in any of his plays, and the way of the world dently is not a pretty way. With the superficialities of the wo however, the comic writer may safely and amusingly play. "Th are," he recognizes, like a true neo-classicist, "Crimes too daring an too horrid for Comedy. But the Vices most frequent, and which a

the common Practice of the looser sort of Livers, are the subject matter of Comedy." So among the affectations and follies of men Congreve works, leaving more serious matters to be corrected by the courts ecclesiastical or civil. "Unmasking" wrote his friend Swift, almost at the same moment when Congreve was defending his plays against Collier, "I think, he has never been allowed fair usage, either in the world or the playhouse." But the unmasking of follies is Congreve's forte.

**Critical Comment**

Kenneth Muir concludes his essay on Congreve with the following words : "It can be said that although Congreve inevitably deals with the relationship between the sexes in his own society, he satirised false relationships both in and outside marriage, and he tried to present, at least, by implication, an ideal marriage based on reason and respect, although without religious sanctions. To admit the existence of adultery at a time when divorce was difficult, and to recognise that love and marriage do not always coincide, was the acceptance not of a literary convention but of one of the facts of life. And perhaps our society is not so enlightened or so inclined to accept a sacramental view of marriage, that we can afford to dismiss Congreve's reading of life as totally irrelevant to our situation."

# 12

# *Outline Story of the Play*

### Marrying for Convenience

Mirabell, a young man-about-town, apparently not a man of great wealth, has had an affair with Mrs. Fainall, the widowed daughter of Lady Wishfort. To protect her from scandal in the event of pregnancy, he has helped engineer her marriage to Mr. Fainall, a man whom he feels to be of sufficiently good reputation to constitute a respectable match, but not a man of such virtue that tricking him would be unfair. Fainall for his part married the young widow because he coveted her fortune to support his amour with Mrs. Marwood. In time the liaison between Mirabell and Mrs. Fainal ended (although this is not explicitly stated), and Mirabell found himself in love with Millamant, the niece and ward of Lady Wishfort, and the cousin of his former mistress.

### Financial Complications

There are, however, financial complications. Half of Millamant's fortune was under her own control, but the other half, 6,000 pounds, was controlled by Lady Wishfort, to be turned over to Millamant if she married a suitor approved by her aunt. Unfortunately Mirabell had earlier offended Lady Wishfort; she had misinterpreted his flattery as love.

Mirabell, therefore, has contrived an elaborate scheme. He has arranged for a pretended uncle (his valet, Waitwell) to woo and win Lady Wishfort. Then Mirabell intends to reveal the actual status of the successful wooer and obtain her consent to his marriage to Millamant by rescuing her from this misalliance. Waitwell was to marry Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid, before the masquerade, so that he might not decide to hold Lady Wishfort to her contract; Mirabell is too much a man of his time to trust anyone in matters of money or love. Millamant is aware of the plot, probably through Foible.

### Mirabell's Scheme

When the play opens, Mirabell is impatiently waiting to hear that Waitwell is married to Foible. During Mirabell's card game with Fainall, it becomes clear that the relations between the two men are strained. There are hints at the fact that Fainall has been twice duped by Mirabell: Mrs. Fainall is Mirabell's former mistress, and Mrs. Marwood, Fainall's mistress, is in love with Mirabell. In the meantime, although Millamant quite clearly intends to have Mirabell, she enjoys teasing him in his state of uncertainty.

**Exposure**

Mirabell bids fair to succeed until, unfortunately, Mrs. Marwood overhears Mrs. Fainall and Foible discussing the scheme as well as Mirabell's and Mrs. Fainall's earlier love affair. Since Mrs. Marwood also overhears insulting comments about herself, she is vengeful and informs Fainall of the plot and the fact, which he suspected before, that his wife was once Mirabell's mistress. The two conspirators now have both motive and means for revenge. In the same afternoon, Millamant accepts Mirabell's proposal and rejects Sir Wilful Witwoud, Lady Wishfort's candidate for her hand.

**Fainall's Villainy**

Fainall now dominates the action. He unmasks Sir Rowland, the false uncle, and blackmails Lady Wishfort with the threat of her daughter's disgrace. He demands that the balance of Millamant's fortune, now forfeit, be turned over to his sole control, as well as the unspent balance of Mrs. Fainall's fortune. In addition, he wants assurance that Lady Wishfort will not marry, so that Mrs. Fainall is certain to be the heir.

This move of Fainall's is now countered; Millamant says that she will marry Sir, Wilful to save her own fortune. Fainall insists that he wants control of the rest of his wife's money and immediate management of Lady Wishfort's fortune. When Mirabell brings two servants to prove that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood were themselves guilty of adultery, Fainall ignores the accusation and points out that he will still create a scandal which would blacken the name of Mrs Fainall unless he gets the money.

**Mirabell Wins**

At this point Mirabell triumphantly reveals his most successful plot. Before Mrs. Fainall, she and Mirabell had suspected the man's character, and she had appointed her lover trustee of her fortune. Fainall is left with no claim to make, because Mrs. Fainall does not control her own money. He and Mrs. Marwood leave in great anger. Sir Wilful steps aside as Millamant's suitor; Lady Wishfort forgives the servants and consents to the match of Mirabell and Millamant.

# 13

# *Act-wise Summary of the Play with Critical Comments*

## ACT I

**Summary**

The curtain rises as Mirabell is defeated by Fainall in a desultory card game at the chocolate house. The conversation reveals that Mirabell is in love with Millamant but is intensely disliked by Millamant's guardian. Lady Wishfort's dislike seems to have some justification; Mirabell at one time pretended to court her in order to conceal his love for her niece. She is fifty five years old, and her vanity was offended when she discovered that Mirabell did not love her.

When Fainall leaves for a moment, a servant enters and informs Mirabell that this valet married that day. Mirabell is pleased because his marriage is a necessary prelude to some secret scheme which is not revealed. Witwoud and Petulant then enter, and we gain the additional information that Witwoud's elder brother is coming to town to court Millamant. Witwoud and Petulant are also both courting Millamant, but only because she is the currently reigning belle. There is further talk of an uncle of Mirabell's who is coming to court Lady Wishfort. The men leave for a walk in the park.

**Critical Comments**

The summary of this act points up one of the difficulties in the structure of the play. The first act does not seem to move forward. It contains only partial exposition, so that the reader has trouble following the play. The relations between Mirabell and Fainall are not made clear. It would be the actors' task to suggest the strain between them. The skilled and, we might say, suspicious reader may glean as much from the lines. Fainall distrusts Mirabell, with good cause. He suspects the nature of the friendship between Mirabell and his wife before their marriage. He also suspects that his mistress, Mrs. Marwood, loves Mirabell. Mirabell is aware of Fainall's suspicions, and, of course, suspects that Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress When Mirabell says that "for the discovery of this amour, I am indebted to your friend, or your wife's friend, Mrs. Marwood," the actor will of course put the emohasis on "or your wife s friends," so as to suggest that the innocent comment is barbed. Fainall pointedly rep-

lies, "What should provoke her to be your enemy unless she has made you advances which you have slighted? Women do not easily forgive omissions of that nature." The actor must read the lines properly on the stage; so must the reader in the study.

Other lines also demand careful reading. The talk about Lady Wishfort is not merely casual: she is very important in the subsequent action. The comments about Millamant's character are highly significant. Despite Mirabell's wit and irony, we must realize his sincerity. The speech beginning "I like her with all her faults" repays examination as a highly ironic yet thoroughly convincing admission of love. The rather mysterious concern with Waitwell's marriage seems strange, until later developments.

## ACT II

### Summary

In St. James's Park, Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood discuss their favourite subjects, men and how to manipulate them. Beneath their apparent friendliness, they are wary of each other as they talk of Mirabell. Mrs. Fainall suspects, quite correctly, that Mrs. Marwood is in love with him.

After Fainall and Mirabell enter, Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall stroll off and leave Fainall and Mrs. Marwood alone on the stage. We now discover that Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress and that he only married his wife for her fortune so as to finance his amour. However, their love includes neither faith nor trust. Fainall is sensitive to the fact that Mrs. Marwood's seeming enmity of Mirabell covers his attraction for her. The scene ends with mutual recrimination and a reconciliation as they leave the stage when Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall return.

The conversation of Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall supplies new revelations. Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall were lovers; she married Fainall as cover for her affair with Mirabell. Mirabell, during their stroll, has told her of his scheme to trick Lady Wishfort and marry Millamant. As he does not trust Waitwell, he arranged for a marriage between Waitwell and Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid. (The news of this marriage arrived in the first act.) After all, having wooed and won Lady Wishfort, Waitwell might plan on actually marrying her.

Millamant now makes her first entrance, accompanied by Witwoud and her maid, Mincing. She is thoroughly aware of her own charm and her power over Mirabell, and toys with Mirabell's love at the same time that she returns it. She is apparently quite prepared to go along with Mirabell's plot, which Foible has revealed to her, a clear indication that in the end she intends to have Mirabell.

After her exit, Waitwell and Foible appear. Waitwell will woo Lady Wishfort in the guise of Sir Rowland, Mirabell's imaginary uncle. As Sir Rowland, he would be a fine match; in addition, the marriage would serve Lady Wishfort as a way to be revenged on Mirabell for his earlier slight, for presumably Mirabell would be

disinherited when Sir Rowland married. All exit, with Waitwell making wry, typically Restoration comments.

**Critical Comments**

In this act the tensions between the characters are exposed Just as Fainall and Mirabell, presumably friends, engaged in a verbal duel that hid a real one, so Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood now fence. There is good reason for Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood not to trust each other; it is true that Mrs. Marwood is the mistress of Mrs. Fainall's husband. By the same token, she is in love with Mirabell, Mrs. Fainall's former, and perhaps present, lover.

One can, from the point of view of the twentieth century, question the nature of the love of Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall. After all, if he had loved her, why had he not married her? She was presumably young, beautiful, wealthy, and available. Interesting also is the affair between Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. Fainall seems to love Mrs. Marwood after his fashion. That love should include trust does not even occur to him. As he says, does she think that the lover will sleep though the husband may nod!

The scenes between Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall and between Mrs. Marwood and Fainall present a real challenge to the actors. Before the audience is given the information that makes it possible to follow the play, the actors must convey the currents of feeling, essentially cynical and unpleasant, which underlay the very polished manners and high style of the exchanges of wit.

## ACT III

**Summary**

At her home, Lady Wishfort is trying to hide the signs of age with cosmetics applied externally and brandy internally. Mrs. Marwood enters and tells her that Foible was talking to Mirabell in the park. While Mrs. Marwood hides in a closet, Lady Wishfort taxes Foible with disloyalty. However, Foible takes advantage of this opportunity to forward Mirabell's plot; she says he stopped her only to insult Lady Wishfort, who therefore determines to accept Sir Rowland, due to arrive that day.

Unfortunately, after Lady Wishfort leaves, Mrs. Fainall enters and she and Foible discuss Mirabell's scheme; Mrs. Marwood still hidden, overhears their conversation. They also mention that Mrs. Fainall was Mirabell's mistress at one time, and that Mrs. Marwood is in love with Mirabell, but he finds her unattractive. Mrs. Marwood's anger is reinforced in the next scene when Millamant also accuses her of loving Mirabell and makes biting remarks about her age.

When the guests arrive for dinner, Petulant and young Witwoud, and then Sir Wilful Witwoud, the elder brother and Millamant's suitor, appear. In a scene that, perhaps comes closer to farce than any other in this play, Sir Wilful does not recognize his peruked, foppish brother, and Young Witwoud refuses to recognize his country bumpkin elder brother. Afterward Mrs Marwood, left

alone with Fainall, describes Mirabell's plot. He is certain now that he has been a cuckold and wants revenge.

Mrs. Marwood then outlines a plan for Fainall. Since Lady Wishfort has control of Millamant's fortune, and since she is very fond of her daughter, Mrs. Fainall, he can insist that Millamant's money be made over to him on threat of making public his wife's transgressions.

**Critical Comments**

Lady Wishfort is a stock character of Restoration drama : and indeed the older woman, eager to entrap a husband, has always been a figure of fun. But that is not to say she has no individuality. In the last three acts Congreve devotes more attention to her character development and gives her more lines than any other character. She is eager to be wooed, but would not seem to pursue. She would be forward but not too forward. She dare not smile or frown, for the paint might crack. She is concerned about appearances, but "what's integrity to an opportunity?" She is a sanctimonious hypocrite (as her description of her daughter's rearing in Act V makes clear) ; her private library, to which she directs Mrs. Marwood in the closet, is made up of devotional and anti-theatrical books. Quarles' *Emblems* are didactic poems, each with its moral attached ; Prynne's *Histrio Mastix* is a long attack on the immorality of the theatre : Collier's *Short View of the Immorality* and Profaneness of the English Stage was published in 1698, two years before the production of *The Way of the World*. "*Bunyan's Works*" hardly need comment.

## ACT IV

**Summary**

After Lady Wishfort is seen preparing for the visit of Sir Rowland, Millamant and Sir Wilful are on stage together. Sir Wilful, somewhat drunk but very shy, is too bashful actually to complete his proposal to Millamant. Overawed by the aloof lady, he is eager to get away and grateful when she dismisses him. It is obvious that he will not succeed, but he is likable in his embarrassment.

Immediately after occurs the scene between Millamant and Mirabell that is often called the proviso scene. They discuss the conditions under which he is prepared to marry her, and under which he is prepared to marry her, and under which she is prepared to accept him. At the end of the scene, when Mrs. Fainall enters, Millamant admits that she does love him violently. As Mirabell leaves, the company—Sir Wilful, young Witwoud, and Petulant—come in from dinner. They are all drunk—Sir Wilful the drunkest of the three. Now the spurious Sir Rowland arrives to woo Lady Wishfort, and his wooing bids fair to be successful when a letter is brought from Mrs. Marwood in which she tells Lady Wishfort of the plot. However Waitwell and Foible between them manage to convince Lady Wishfort that the letter is actually sent by Mirabell

and is designed as a plot against Sir Rowland. Apparently Lady Wishfort is convinced, at least for the moment.

**Critical Comments**

Much of Act IV is devoted to variations on the theme of courtship in the Restoration manner. First the comic country squire is portrayed. At the end of the act, the obviously burlesqued Sir Rowland woos Lady Wishfort in a broadly comic manner. Between the two is the proviso scene.

The proviso scene in *The Way of the World* is generally considered the finest in Restoration comedy. The motif was first used by Dryden in *Secret Love*. The scene must be read carefully and, in a performance must be developed by the actors with some finesse. Under the polished phrases and the verbal fencing the gay couple are very much in love as Millamant admits at the end of the scene. The careful student might reread the scene at this point, to see what has led up to this admission.

This proviso scene is an emblem of the Restoration comic convention at its civilized best. At no time do the characters descend to any obvious display of emotion, let alone pathos. Even, though in love, they conduct the scene with complete decorum. In the Restoration convention, in every exchange between a man and a woman each is trying to build his own ego. All encounters are duels and to be bested in the game of wits is to lose. The proviso scene is the reconciliation of these seeming irreconcilables. Mirabell will be a husband, Millamant will dwindle into a wife ; but they have made a victory of their mutual surrender.

The gentlemen, drunk after dinner, who enter immediately afterward, are at once a comic interlude and a wry commentary. We have seen the Restoration ideal ; we now see the gentleman as he actually exists.

## ACT V

**Summary**

The scene, as before, is Lady Wishfort's house. Lady Wishfort has discovered Mirabell's plot. Foible tries unsuccessfully to make excuses for herself.

Fainall now makes his demands. As Millamant's fortune of 6,000 pounds was presumably forfeit when she refused to marry a suitor selected for her by Lady Wishfort, he wants the money as his price for not blackening his wife's reputation. He also wants the remainder of Mrs. Fainall's fortune turned over to his sole control. And he insists on Lady Wishfort's not marrying again, so that he be sole heir. These terms are very harsh, and Lady Wishfort might not be prepared to go along with them, except that Mrs. Marwood, standing by, goads her on by harping on the public disgrace of her daughter, Mrs. Fainall.

When the two maids now reveal that Fainall, in his turn, has been unfaithful to his wife, he refuses to be deterred ; he is willing to be the subject of scandal himself, but he will still make public his wife's shame. When Millamant states that she is prepared to

marry Sir Wilful, thus meeting the wishes of her aunt and saving her 6,000 pounds. Fainall suspects a trick ; but he can still demand control of the balance of his wife's estate, and now also the control of Lady Wishfort's. At this point, Mirabell presents the evidence which will protect Mrs. Fainall. At the time of her marriage, they had judged Fainall's character correctly, and Mrs. Fainall secretly signed over her fortune to Mirabell's control. There is, therefore, no money which Fainall can successfully obtain.

In great anger, Fainall and Mrs. Marwood leave the stage, vowing dire vengeance. Lady Wishfort, having discovered that Fainall was a villain and that Mrs. Marwood, her friend, was not a true friend is now prepared to forgive Mirabell ; Millamant can now marry him with her aunt's consent. It is on this happy, but somewhat indeterminate note that the play ends.

**Critical Comments**

The fifth act is muddled ; there is far too much plotting and action. Fainall comes in with his demands, Mirabell and Sir Wilful Witwoud enter to frustrate part of them. Foible and Mincing disclose the information that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood have also been guilty of adultery. For the first time we hear of the deed Mrs. Fainall signed. And finally, Lady Wishfort forgives everyone.

If one looks at it structurally, it is possible to see that Mirabell's original scheme is here balanced by the counterplot of Fainall's and Mrs. Marwood. They, in turn, are foiled by Foible and Mincing, on the one hand, and by Millamant's presumed willingness to marry Sir Wilful, on the other. But these developments are then countered by Fainall's insistence on the balance of Mrs. Fainall's money. And this move is conclusively countered by Mirabell's producing the deed signed before Mrs. Fainall's marriage, presumably in anticipation of, and protection against, just such a situation.

Lady Wishfort, in this act, becomes almost sympathetic character. Her faults and her vanities are many, but here we see her trying to protect her daughter, finding that the people whom she trusted have proved completely treacherous. Caught on the one hand by the desire to save those whom she loves, and trapped by the treachery of those she trusted, she is an odd figure in a very unusual situation in Restoration drama.

The ending of the play is not entirely satisfactory. For one thing, one is finally left with the question, "What of Mrs. Fainall ?" She will retain her money, but her lover is last to her, and it is not entirely clear that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood will not find some rather unpleasant revenge.

# 14

# *Stage History of the Play*

**Poor Reception at First**

*The Way of the World* was somewhat coolly received when it was first acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, probably in the first week of March, 1700. Dryden wrote to Mrs. Steward on March 12: "Congreve's new play has had but moderate success, though it deserves much better." On the same day Lady Marrow wrote to an acquaintance in the country that "Congreve's new play doth not answer expectation, there being no plot in it but many witty things to ridicule the Chocolate House, and the fantastical part of the world." Downes attibuted the fact that the play "had not the success the company expected" to the fact that it was "too keen a satire". Congreve himself acknowledged in his Dedication that he had scarcely expected the play to succeed, "for but little of it was prepared for that general taste which seems now to be predominant in the plates of an audience." He resolved to "commit his quite and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience" and retired from the stage at the early age of thirty. Had Dryden not died in May of that year, it is possible that, as Congreve's "true lover", he might have dissuaded his brilliant disciple from so drastic a decision.

**The Original Cast**

For its premiere *The Way of the World* had an excellent cast. Anne Bracegridie, for whom as for his other heroines, Congreve had just, gained the applause of court and city." She presumably again played Millamant (although the cast is not known) in the 1705 revival of the play. Cibber recorded that when she acted Millamant "all the faults, follies, and affectations of that agreeable tyrant were venially melted down into so many charms and attractions of a conscious beauty." Mrs. Bracegirdle was well matched with John Verbruggen as Mirabell. When the pair acted in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, audiences were enchanted by his untaught airs and her "smiling repartes" and were afraid they were going off the stage every moment. Thomas Betterton, nearing retirement, must have played Fainall with the Flamboyant vigour which always distinguished his acting. The original cast included Elizabeth Barry as Marwood, effectively drawling out her words, William Bowen, "an actor of spirit," as Witwoud, and Cave Underhill, who had been D'Avenant's best comedian, as corpulent and awkward Sir Wilful.

**Later History**

*The Way of the World* was only sporadically revived for some years and continued to be surpassed in popularity by two of Congreve's other plays, *The Old Bachelor* and *Love for Love*. Slowly, however, "the most intellectually accomplished of English comedies" gained an honourable place in the repertories of the London theatres. Such able actresses as Anne Oldfield, Christian Horton, Hannah Pritchard, Peg Woffington, and Frances Abington graced the role of Millamant and often chose *The Way of the World* for their benefit performances. Robert Wilks, debonair and genteel, excelled as Mirabell, Colley Cibber as Witwoud, Richard Yates as Sir Wilful. After 1777 none of Congreve's plays held the stage with success, and their performance became infrequent. Two of the plays, *Love for Love*, and *The Way of the World*, have fared better in the twentieth century than for many years previously, with notable revivals in both England and America. In the late autumn of 1924 *The Way of the World* had its longest run......one hundred and twenty performances ............at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York.

# 15

## The Plot

**The Intrigues**

The play opens with two men about town, Fainall and Mirabell, talking. One has married into the Wishfort family ; the other wishes to marry them. Their conversation explains something of the intrigues which have occurred in the past. Mirabell has paid court to Lady Wishfort but the shameful nature of these advances has been exposed by Mrs. Marwood. This revelation has placed Mirabell in a difficulty as he had done this in order to conceal his love for Millamant, Lady Wishfort's niece half of whose fortune depends upon her marrying with Lady Wishfort's approval. Lady Wishfort is, not unnaturally, furious with Mirabell, for though she is fifty five she has been flattered by having a young man pay court to her. But Mirabell is engaged "in a matter of some sort of mirth which is not yet ripe for discovery." This, though we are told it at the time, is his plan to try to marry Lady Wishfort to his servant Waitwell, who has just married Foible, Lady Wishfort to his servant Waitwell, who has just married Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid.

**Gradual Revelation**

The gradual releasing of information is cleverly devised, though some of the meanings are not clear at first reading. First, we hear Mirabell enquiring whether Waitwell has married Foible ; then later in the first act we hear that Mirabell has an uncle who is between him and his estate and who might marry Millamant. Later still we hear that this is a story Mirabell has spread by means of Foible as a bait for Lady Wishfort ; he hopes that she will agree to marry his servant Waitwell who will pretend to be this fictitious uncle, Sir Rowland. If the plan succeeds, he will be able to exercise power over her, and, in rescuing her from the difficulties into which his plot will have landed her, gain her consent to his marrying Millamant, and to Millamant's retaining her fortune. But Mirabell has also to persuade Millamant to marry him. He has early been described by Fainall as a man too discerning, for a passionate man, in the faults of the woman he loves : his reply is that, for a discerning man, he is too passionate a lover. He likes Millamant with all her faults, indeed because of them. And she teases him, her affectations serving "but to make her the more agreeable" to him.

**The Complications**

Were the plot only concerned with whether or not Mirabell

will persuade Millamant to marry him, and whether or not he will gain Lady Wishfort's consent to the marriage, all would be relatively simple. The complications, however, develop rapidly from the hints given in the first conversation between Mirabell and Fainall. Fainall has a mistress, Mrs. Marwood, and she fancies Mirabell as a lover: But Mirabell has been Mrs. Fainall's lover in the past. Mrs. Marwood is deeply jealous of Mirabell's love for Millamant, and just as she previously told Lady Wishfort that Mirabell was not sincere in paying attention to her, now she tells Fainall of Mirabell's plot, of which both Mrs. Fainall and Millamant are aware. Fainall reveals himself and his true nature in Act III: he decides, at Mrs. Marwood's prompting, to exercise power over Lady Wishfort by blackmailing her with a threat to part with his wife because of her earlier affair with Mirabell. Fainall already has a deed of settlement of the best part of his wife's estate. And so he now, as well as Mirabell, is engaged upon a plot against Lady Wishfort.

**Mirabell Exposed**

In the fourth act, when Lady Wishfort goes off to entertain the supposed Sir Rowland, Sir Wilful Witwoud begins, as his aunt has ordered him, to make his addresses to Millamant, but she puts him off and there follows the magnificent scene between Mirabell and Millamant in which they finally agree to marry. Some drunken comedy with Petulant, Witwoud, and Sir Wilful Witwoud occurs. Relations between Waitwell as the supposed Sir Rowland and Lady Wishfort are developing fast, even despite Mrs. Marwood's letter denouncing him, which Foible and Waitwell manage to gloss over. But Mirabell's plot is finally discovered. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood appear to have to have won. Waitwell is imprisoned, and Lady Wishfort goes for a constable to arrest Foible after a flow of what Meredith called "boudoir Billingsgate". Foible, however, tells Mrs. Fainall that she can provide evidence of Fainall's affair with Mrs. Marwood.

**The Climax**

The play is beginning to reach its climax. In the next scene Lady Wishfort is torn between the contrary advice of her daughter, Mrs. Fainall, and that of Mrs. Marwood. She decides to appease Fainall, who enters and states his conditions for remaining silent. Lady Wishfort is not to marry without his consent; all Mrs. Fainall's fortune is to be made over to him and the moiety of Millamant's fortune which Lady Wishfort controls is also to be his. When he leaves, Millamant and Sir Wilful enter. They announce that they have decided to marry and that Mirabell will resign his contract with Millamant. Mirabell arrives and Lady Wishfort agrees to forgive him. Then Fainall returns to obtain Lady Wishfort signature to a document making over Millamant's and his wife's fortunes to him. Lady Wishfort and Mirabell become friends, as he suggests he may be able to help her; she decides he can marry Millamant after all, and then he brings on Foible and Mincing (Millamant's servant) who expose Mrs. Marwood's relations with

Fainall. Next Waitwell enters with the black box which finally resolves the situation. Petulant and Witwoud have witnessed a deed of conveyance of Mrs, Fainall's estate to Mirabell made before she married Fainall, as he has no money of his own and she controls her future. Sir Wilful's feelings are not hurt by Lady Wishfort's consenting to Millamant's marrying Mirabell instead of himself ; he has been party to the final deception, of his and Millamant's apparent agreement to marry, a move arranged with him by Mirabell and Millamant.

**Lady Wishfort Relents**

The plot has been worked out. Another generation has taken over. The children of Lady Wishfort and her dead sisters have come into their own. Lady Wishfort, through self deception, through a desire to seem younger than her fifty-five years when Mirabell was pretending to pay his attentions to her, through a concern to seem pure —and pursued—while actually pursuing the supposed Sir Rowland, and through a reliance on the false friendship of Mrs. Marwood, has been brought to a position where she is willing that Millamant and Mirabell should marry. Norman Holland has pointed out in *The First Modern Comedies* that Lady Wishfort's cabal is broken up at the end of the play : the two men admitted, Witwoud and Petulant, accompany Sir Wilful Witwoud on his travels ; Foible and her husband have their farm ; and Mrs. Marwood is beyond the pale.

# 16

# *Themes of the Play*

### Characters and Events Related to Central Theme

The precise statement of the theme of a work of art is always a little unsatisfactory. The pithy sentence must omit a great deal ; it always does violence to the whole work. Nevertheless, it is worth making the effort to determine a the ., or themes, in a play as a guide to study or analysis.

As a point of departure, it is valid to say that the theme of this play is given us by Congreve in the title, *The Way of the World.* All the events and characters of the play can be related to this central theme. The obvious criticism is that the same "theme" can be ascribed to unlimited numbers of other, and quite different, novels and plays. Further, Congreve does not, in this play, seem to take a consistent position. Sometimes he is direct, sometimes ironic ; sometimes he deplores, sometimes he approves ; at times he amused ; and most of the time his position is a compound of all of these attitudes.

To get a more satisfactory statement we might use a different approach that would give a better sense of the texture of the play. Most Restoration playwrights supplied their plays with alternate titles, or subtitles. Since Congreve did not, we might seek for the different subtitles that are appropriate. Each one would suggest a theme, although not the theme. These may put flesh on the bare bones the title gives us.

### Love a La Mode

Certainly, the play can be seen as a dramatic presentation of varieties of love in the England of the year 1700. Central is the delicate handling of the love game as played by Mirabell and Millamant. They represent the ideal of the Restoration attitude ; intense yet balanced, their love based on mutual esteem with no surrender of individuality. Contrasted with it are Mirabell's earfier and quite ambiguous love affair with Mrs. Fainall ; the illicit love of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, presumably passionate, but wholly without mutual trust ; the spurious court Young Witwoud pays to Millamant ; the direct and somewhat coarse approach of Sir Wilful ; and at the opposite extreme completely, the aging and undignified longings of Lady Wishfort, vain, unrealistic, over-eager, desperate, and a little pathetic.

**Love and Money**

Such an approach is closely related to that of *Love a la Mode*, although they are not identical. In the world whose way is presented here, love and money are values to be taken into account at all times. The sincerity of Mirabell's love does not make him lose sight of the importance of Millamant's fortune. Fainall marries for money to support an illicit love; apparently the thought of marrying Mrs. Marwood without adequate money (however "adequate" might be defined) is unthinkable. Money is Lady Wishfort's sole hold over her child and her ward. Even the marriage of the servants is built on a promise of a handsome sum of money. This is the world's way. Love without money is an impossible sentimental dream, although money often corrupts what love there is.

**A Gallery of Portraits**

Congreve's statements in the dedication, the prologue, and the epilogue suggest that this might be a valid subtitle. Since it is the way of the world to put a premium on youth, Mirabell and Millamant stand at the centre, representing all that is to be commended. Mirabell is the beaux ideal : polished, poised, rational and balanced, witty and perspicacious without being what we might today call over-intellectual. Millamant is the belle : feminine, beautiful, witty, not prudish, but with a sense of her own worth. She has avoided the messiness and humiliation of sexual intrigue. Opposed to Mirabell are would-be wits, worthy but graceless boors, and deep intriguers. Opposed to Millamant are women engaged in adultery, and an old dowager without decorum. Every character reveals himself in action, and together they produce a gallery of self-portraits.

**Jungle of High Intrigue**

This subtitle would focus attention on some of the values of London society. Everyone is engaged in intrigue : Mirabell intrigues to gain consent to his marriage from Lady Wishfort, and this involves intrigue within intrigue, for he does not trust Waitwell. Fainall intringues in turn. Everyone is involved in one or the other of these schemes—Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood, and the servants. Even Lady Wishfort in her willingness to marry Sir Rowland has a devious purpose—revenge on Mirabell. When Mrs. Fainall married her husband, that was part of an intrigue, as was his marriage to her. And as we see in the play, victory goes to Mirabell, not because of his virtue, but simply because he is the most successful intriguer.

Certainly all these possible subtitles, rather than any one, add up to the ironic commentary on society that is in the title.

# 17

# *Characterisation*

**Conventional Characters**

Congreve's characters tend to be conventional. Frequently he gives us relatively flat, two dimensional persons; but at other times his imagination works more vividly than we realize. In Act II of *The Way of the World*, Mirabell, talking to Mrs. Fainall about her husband, remarks, "When, you are weary of him you know your remedy". The significanc of the remark is apparent only at the final discovery in Act V that before marrying Fainall the lady had with remarkable presence of mind deeded her whole estate in trust to Mirabell. She would never have done that to Dorimant: the Congreve gentleman can be trusted. His top ladies—the virtuous heroine of each play—are not finely imagined. Millamant alone has colour and charm, and Millamant above the other three heroines is the clear victim of affectation: the thought of a husband is too, too tedious! In her case it is perhaps Congreve's wit rather than her charm that is truly vivid. Her entry (Act II) in full sail with "a shoal of fools for tenders" is unsurpassable, as is her capitulation to Mirabell at the end. Early in the play Mirabell and Fainall talk of her, and when Fainall opines that she has wit, Mirabell replies: "She has beauty enough to make any man think so, and complaisance enough not to contradict him who shall tell her so." Yet he goes on to say that her even affectations make her more agreeable. The passage is in Congreve's finest vein.

**Inferior Characters Better Portrayed**

In general, however, it is the incidental or inferior persons that Congreve best delineates., His second gentelmen are negligible plot-ridden sketches; his villains and scorned ladies (except perhaps Lady Wishfort) are melodramatic creatures who belong in heroic plays; but his valets, his gulls, and his fops—who are literary and not, like Sir Fopling Flutters, addicted to over-dressing merely—are likely to be superbly conceived. His one worthy country squire, Sir Wilful Witwoud, is much underrated as a character. Sir Wilful's eagerness to get his boots off in the drawing room or to get at his sack, and his lack of eagerness to get at his wooing are all broadly yet finely turned. When critics talk of Congreve's artifice and elegance, they should recall this roistering drunken squire, who nevertheless so pleases Congreve that he is made before the end of the play a friend and all to Millamant—far more acceptable than his

affected, foppish brother. The dramatist's portraits of the gentleman's gentleman are original and unexpected. The admirable Waitwell can disguise himself as Sir Rowland and come a-wooing Lady Wishfort most genteelly. Of his lawfully wedded wife—another of Mirabell's thoughtful precautions to protect Lady Wishfort—Waitwell can say with dignity: "With submission, we have indeed been solacing in lawful delights; but still with an eye to business, Sir. I have instructed her as well as I could."

**The Central Characters**

The central characters are not heartless, although—as we have seen with regard to Mirabell and Millamant—they pretend to be less in love than they are. The fact that ladies and gentlemen are also men and women is the chief point of the play. The characters for whom our sympathies are engaged are the most sympathetic ones in the play; and if we read them in chronological order, we notice a gradual change of attitude on the part of the dramatist. We are not asked to condemn Bellmour's promiscuity very seriously; but Congreve was criticised for his satire of female frailty in *The Double Dealer*, and Valentine's prodigal past is one reason why Angelica hesitates to marry him. All Congreve's heroines are chaste. The adultery of Fainall with Mrs. Marwood is condemned; and if the relationship of Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall is condoned, one has only to compare it with Dorimant's treatment of his former mistresses to see how much more civilized Congreve is than Etherege.

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# *Main Characters of the Play*

### (1) Fainall

Fainall's cynical wit, his man of the world attitude towards marriage, his praise of dissembling are soon shown for what they are worth. His neglect of his wife, his hectoring conversation with Mrs. Marwood in Act II, and his subsequent promise to marry her develop, in Act III, into an ugly scene with her when Mrs. Marwood tells him of his wife's former affair with Mirabell. He is worked upon by her to the pitch where, in Act V, he presents his blackmailing demands to Lady Wishfort—claims he increases later like a true blackmailer, demanding that she should submit her estate to his management, when he presents his document for her signature. He depises his wife as "an insignificant thing" and even tries to attack her once Mirabell's deed is produced. His pretences to truth have been exposed. Mrs. Marwood remarked this earlier ; the production of this earlier deed shows that the settlement by which he had wheedled his wife out of her fortune was "pretended" and its production emphasise his falsity.

### (2) Mirabell

Mirabell gradually develops in the play. He seems little different from Fainall at first. Then he shows himself to be serious, to be deeply in love, the deeper for his appreciation of Millamant's affectations. He realises her true qualities, and, in Act II, he shows in the midst of their banter that he cares for her deeply enough to wish she did not waste her time on fools. He sees through the emptiness of the Witwouds and Petulants, but she teases him for his sententious attempts to make her serious. When they meet again in the fourth act he has more poise. He caps her quotation from Suckling—he is no rustic Sir Wilful—and he realises her whirlwind wit revolves round the problem of how she may retain her liberty in marriage. She may, if he agrees to her terms, which he thinks "pretty reasonable", by degrees dwindle into a wife. He, too, wants terms, he does not want to be beyond measure enlarged into a husband. And his terms too—though Millamant makes a mock protest "O horrid provisos"—are likely to prove him a tractable and complying husband. He develops greater skill in his dealings with Lady Wishfort, and ultimately proves himself a stronger and kinder man than Fainall. It is he who finally urges truth upon those about

to wed, and thus reinforce the play's general contrast between appea-rance and reality.

### (3) Millamant

Millamant enters the play brilliantly (if somewhat late, in the middle of the second act): Mirabell's description is memorable : "Here she comes I'faith full Sail, with her Fan spread and her Strea-mers out, and a Shoal of Fools for Tenders......" Her liveliness and gaiety sing through her speech :

> O the Vanity of these Men' Fainall, d'ye hear him ? If they did not commend us, we were not handsome ! Now you must know they could not commend one, if one was not handsome. Beauty the Lover's Gift—Lord, what is a Lover, that it can give ? Why one makes Lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases : And then if one pleases one makes more.

She does not confine her wit to mixed company. She is elegant in conversation with Mrs. Marwood in the third act, and later she re-marks that an illiterate man is her aversion : "I wonder at the Im-pudence of any illiterate Man, to offer to make Lover." This casual conversation has revealed, however, that she is thinking seriously of marriage : "Ah ! to marry an Ignorant that can hardly Read or Write." And her thoughtfulness continues ; she vacillates as to whether or not see Mirabell, meanwhile despairing of the "rustic, ruder than Gothick" Sir Wilful who cannot play her conversational game, and does not know who Suckling is. Mirabell enters and continues her quotation. The contrast is neatly done : it prepares us for a realisation that she and Mirabell have much in common. What they have in common is an awareness of the dangers of marriage, and the poems quoted turn upon this. Professor Muir has drawn attention to Congreve's purpose in reviving a cavalier debate about the promiscuity and constancy of men and women which Suckling's poems illustrate. Millamant's pre-occupation with Suck-ling's poetry is understood by Mirabell. The fact of adultery was obviously present in Restoration society ; and the obvious object in the play was Mrs Fainall. The bargaining scene between Mirabell and Millamant follows. They pretend not to be violently in love :

> it is a delicate kind of insurance, and insistence upon the need for something better than the way of the world. They want their marriage to last and to last upon terms of mutual respect. And Millamant's words put the case strongly for the reality of affection rather than its appearance ; the words she uses gives the scene an in-dividual life lacking in similar scenes in D'Urfe's *Astree* and Dryden's *Secret Love* ; she is deeply involved and her speech is, naturally, highly idiosyncratic.

Her response to Mirabell's demands is one based upon a sense of genuine decorum. He wants her to be herself and to be true to

him. She is to behave with decency, to avoid running her complexion, be a good mother to his children, be sober—and when Mrs. Fainall enters she agrees to marry him. "Well then—I'll take my Death I'm in a horrid Fright—Fainall, I shall never say it—Well—I think I'll endure you." Congreve realises how important this decision is for Millamant. She is risking all : "Well, if Mirabell shou'd not make a good Husband, I am a lost thing ;—for I find I love him violently." And finally when Fainall's designs have been overcome she has her reward. Mirabell is as much in love with her, and he too knows his happiness is at risk unless the marriage is true.

### (4) Lady Wishfort

Lady Wishfort is at once a figure of fun, the widow of fifty-five who does not want to face her age, and a figure of pathos. She is gullible and gulled. Her first appearance (Like Millamant's, it is surprisingly late in the play, in the third act) is characteristic. She is at her toilet, using make-up heavily, and cherry brandy too. She fires up at Foible's reports of Mirabell's calling her superannuated ; and yet when she looks at herself she realises that she looks like an old peeled wall. She is concerned with appearances.

She is easily influenced by Mrs. Marwood, and at her suggestion changes her mind about the suitability of Sir Wilful as a husband for Millamant. She explains the way of the world to Sir Wilful who cannot fathom the fashionable manners of his half brother. She prepares to meet the supposed Sir Rowland, wondering how she will present herself to him.

Her comment on Sir Wilful when he is drunk is revealing. She thinks he will never make a suitable husband for Millamant—"at least before he has been." And her conversation with "Sir Rowland" is a masterpiece of keeping up appearances.

Her treatment of Foible when she hears of the plot is a wonderful piece of abuse, of vigorous rounded fury and ruthless rage. But her only solution to the situation imposed by Fainall is to seek rufuge in the pastoral. "Dear Marwood," she cries, "let us leave the world, and retire by ourselves and be Shepherdesses." She abuses her daughter but takes Mrs. Marwood's advice, only eventually to remark when all is well that Mrs. Fainall has had her mother's prudence. In the final unravelling Mirabell has reminded her twice that she has promised him her niece's hand. Her experience has not been easy. She has been an object of ridicule, and has been under considerable strain; she has wasted her spirit and is ready to sink with fatigue. She has been punished for her ludicrousness and affectation.

# 19

# *Style*

**Subtle Characters**

The most evident pleasure we obtain from the drama is in the interplay of characters, by the colours woven together to make up an objective view of humanity; but though in this, too, Congreve must be ranked with the masters, he does not take a very high place among them.

*The Way of the World*, however, soars high, and the characterization becomes subtle and individual; too subtle almost, since even Pope was constrained to ask 'Tell me if Congreve broke through them indeed.' For here Congreve broke through the rules he had laid down in that happy piece of constructive criticism, the *Letter Concerning Humour in Comedy*, and made his people three dimensional. The greatest triumph, of course, is Millamant, many faceted, spontaneous, who hides her feeling beneath her gaiety, and is so well set off against Lady Wishfort, Mrs. Marwood, and Mrs. Fainall, not containing within herself the springs that move those others, but alive with the possibility of containing them.

**Congreve's Language**

*The Way of the World* is throughout authentic Congreve, and is of incomparable beauty in its kind. Here whatever he may have learned from his predecessors, he made something peculiarly his own, impossible to imitate. For sinewy flexibility and point, combined with seductive gentleness; for the full gamut of vowel sounds and the varied spacing of stresses, English literature had to wait for Landor until it once more heard a voice that had something of the especial quality of Congreve's Addison, for instance, made for too flat a country out of Congreve's beautifully accidented landscape, and one has only to read *The Drummer* to see how short he fell.

For his satiric passages Congreve could still use the Jonsonian regular ring, coming down thump on the last syllable with a spondee; or keen iampics, i 'Gad', like locking the door upon a prisoner :

> For a fool's visit is always a disguise: and never admit-:ed by a woman of wit, but to blind her affair with a lover of sense.

But when he came to the more delicate passages, especially when he wished to move to sympathy, he nearly always closed upon a trochee, with that plaintive, almost melancholy effect Landor used so well,

and that Fletcher tried to get with the feminine double ending in blank verse. In the same way he transformed down the rather too marked contrasts in the vowel sounds in the antithetical parts of the sentence the broad distinction having become too common a trick, and wearisome in the writings of such as the Marquis of Halifax. Take even that torrential passage at the beginning of the last act, wherein Lady Wishfort is not only 'at once concise and voluble', but a poetess :

> Out of my house, out of my house, thou viper, thou serpent, that I have fostered: thou bosom traitress, that I have raised from nothing...begone, begone, begone, go, go,......that I took from washing of old gauze and weaving of dead hair, with a bleak blue nose, over a chafing dish of starved embers, and dining behind a traverse rag, in a shop no bigger than a bird cage,... go, go, starve again, do, do.

It was certainly no ordinary inspiration that imagined that splendidly incisive 'bleak blue nose', with its deepening sound to clinch the delicious modelling of 'from washing of old gauze and weaving of dead hair; or fathered the equally effective charge from 'traverse-rag' to 'bird-cage', and the final return to 'starve'.

**Delicate Play of Words**

If one were to have to select the two lines that best exhibit Congreve's flavour, one might do worse than choose the sentence that ushers in Millamant for the first time :

> Here she comes i 'faith full sail, with her fan spread and streamers out, and shoal of fools for tenders...Ha, ha, I cry her mercy.

The beauty of that needs no insistence; the delicate play of the vowels, the dancing rhythm, with the sharp uptake at the end attended with the entirely new sound of 'cry', sweep us away with their effect of spontaneity. And see, too, a little later in the same scene, how skilfully he can now play on one note, recurring to the same word :

> Beauty the lover's gift—Lord, what is a lover that it can give ? Why one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soons as one pleases: and then, if one pleases, one makes more.

'How it chimes and cries link in the close, divinely ! The reiteration never gives the ear the smallest bother, because, said as they must be to gain the full meaning, the phrases only gather their weight upon 'pleases' in the last instance, the stresses otherwise playing all around it. At last the voice fatefully pounces upon the word, as a hawk, after several feints, lands upon a predestined prey.

**Rhythm of Changes from Scene to Scene**

Those extracts are from that miraculous second act, which shows a more consummate mastery than any other passage in the dramatic literatures of the period. The whole rhythm of changes of

swiftness from scene to scene is astoundingly beautiful and moving. The pace is made up of varying emotions, from the corrosive jealousy of Mrs. Marwood to the almost too sweet melancholy of Mirabell, and in every instance the phrasing is perfectly adapted, as well to the highest gaiety as to the gravest doubt. Nor are we at any time kept too long at the same pitch, and the succeeding scene always seems just the right one to modulate the change of our emotions. In its tuneful measure the passage between the lovers reminds one of the act of Le Tartufe ; and there the whole of Millamant is revealed, the wise and winning woman who knows that life is so serious that we cannot afford always to be serious about it, and wear for ever an inflexible wise face.

Yet it is not surprising that the play failed at first performance, for it does in truth evaporate into an essence almost too fine, and one cannot but suspect that Congreve was writing for himself alone, forgetting a little the cruder exigencies of the stage. When it may be said of *The Way of the World* what is often remarked of Shakespeare's play, that it is better in the study than on the scene. With neither is this absurdity true ; all it means is that intimacy of reading discloses beauties that cannot immediately be snatched, and that thoroughly to enjoy these plays in the acting we must first of all know them well. Then one awaits the delicious phrase, the thrilling movement, the breath-catching swerve of tempo, even as one expects the enunciation of a theme in a familiar Bach concerto, or revels in the arabesque of a well-known page of counterpoint. And this, perhaps, is a touchstone for the surest works of art, only to reveal their final perfection to the lover : for though, to be commended, an aspirant must declare some grace, in its most treasured, its most enriching forms, beauty is the lover's gift indeed.

# 20

## *An Estimate of the Play*

**Congreve Essentially for the Theatre**

Some dramatic critics, shutting their eyes to Congreve's success in the theatre in our own time, persist in the belief that the academic critic is apt to be seduced by the beauty of Congreve's prose into believing he was a good dramatist. But this misses the point. Congreve's plays are meant to be enjoyed in the theatre, rather than to be savoured in the study, as Virginia Woolf's praise indicates.

"Never was any prose so quick. Miraculously pat, on the spot, each speaker caps the last, without fumbling or hesitation ; their minds are full charged ; it seems as if they had to rein themselves in, bursting with energy as they are, alive and alert to their finger tips. It is we who fumble, make irrelevant observations, until the illusion takes hold of us, and what with the rhythm of the speech and the indescribable air of tension, of high breeding that pervades it, the world of the stage becomes the real world and the other, outside the play, but the husk and cast off clothing. The impression is conveyed by the curl of a phrase on the ear ; by speed ; by stillness. It is as impossible to analyse Congreve's prose as to distinguish the elements which make the summer air. But then, since words have meaning we notice here a sudden depth beneath the surface, a meaning not grasped but felt, and then come to realize something not merely dazzling in this world, but natural, for all its wit ; even familiar, and traditional. It has a coarseness, a humour, something like Shakespeare's ; a toppling imagination that heaps image upon image ; a lightning swiftness of apprehension that snatches a dozen meanings and compacts them into one."

It is the wonderful speakability of Congreve's prose, which is his greatest triumph. If the actor keeps the rhythms, and stresses the right words, the meaning is easy to follow. This is one reason why actors who have appeared in a Congreve comedy find it difficult and disappointing to appear afterwards in a prose comedy by any other dramatist.

**Congreve's Brilliant Art**

Even those critics who admit that Congreve's plays—and especially *The Way of the World*—are incomparably the finest examples of the comedy of manners, and certainly superior in most ways to *The School for Scandal* or *She Stoops to Conquer*, are apt to complain

of the artificiality of the genre. It is no longer possible to accept Lamb's ingenious argument, which he never intended to be taken seriously, that the plays are fantasies about an imaginary world ; they reflect in a highly polished mirror the society of Congreve's day. Truly artificial comedies (as Dobree has remarked) are the sentimental plays of Congreve's successors. But, it is argued, the world with which they deal is a narrow one, the characters are heartless, and we do not much care what happens to then. Schelling spoke of Congreve's brilliant, soulless dramatic art and Henry Ten Eyck Perry. while admitting that the surface of his plays is dazzling, complained of the lack beneath :

"It is only too evident that Congreve never really understood the fundamental principles of human behaviour. He is, after all, only a professional funny man."

It is difficult to answer such strange misunderstandings both of the nature of comedy and of Congreve's art. But it may least be said that the world of his plays is not so narrow as it is sometimes painted and that we are not bounded by the walls of a fashionable drawing room, as we are, for example, in *Le Misanthrope*. The outside world—in the shape of Ben, Sir Wilful. bounching Margery, Trapland's widow, Pumple Nose the Attorney—is continually breaking in ; and there is a great social gulf between Lord Touchwood and the Fondlewife, for example or between Miss Prue and Millamant.

**The Central Characters**

It is equally important to emphasise that the central characters are not heartless, although—as we have seen with regard to Mirabell and Millamant—they pretend to be less in love than they are. That ladies and gentlemen are also men and women is the chief point of the play. The characters for whom our sympathies are engaged are the most sympathetic ones in the plays ; and if we read them in chronological order, we notice a gradual change of attitude on the part of the dramatist. We are not asked to condemn Bellmour' promiscuity very seriously ; but Congreve was criticised for his satire of female frailty in *The Double Dealer*, and Valentine's prodigal past is one reason why Angelica hesitates to marry him. All Congreve's heroines are chaste. The adultery of Fainall with Mrs. Marwood is condemned ; and if the relationship of Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall is condemned, one has only to compare it with Dorimant's treatment of his former mistresses to see how much more civilised Congreve is than Etherege.

The accusation that Congreve's heroes are heartless and Cynical has rubbed off on the dramatist himself. It is ironical that a man who wa the embodiment of sensibility, a man whose contemporaries were unanimously in praising for the sweetness of his manners and the kindness of his heart, should be regarded as a monster of cold cynicism. Congreve, we are told, did not believe in faith or honour. He watches the corruption of society with an amused detachment, and is resolved to be content if it is only graceful.

**Living Ornament of Comic Scene**

It should be remembered that Congreve was still a young man when *The Way of the World* was performed—just over thirty—and that during the remaining thirty of his life he wrote nothing of importance : part of a translation of a Moliere farce, and a couple of odes. Why he gave up writing comedies is still a matter for debate. He suffered a good deal in later years from indifferent health ; he may have been disappointed by the cool reception of *The Way of the World* : this is the implication of these remarks by Dennis :

"There is a Gentleman, the living Ornament of the Comic Scene, who after he had for several Years entertained the Town, with that Wit and Humour, and Art and Vivacity, which are so becoming of the Comic Stage, produc'd at last a Play, which besides that it was equal to most of the former in those pleasant Humours which the Laughers so much require, had some certain Scenes in it, which were writ with so much Grace and Delicacy, that they alone were worth an entire comedy. What was the Event ? The play was hiss'd by Barbarous Fools in the Acting : and an impertinent Trifle was brought on after it, which was acted with vast Applause, which rais'd so much Indignation in the foresaid Writer, that he quitted the Stage in Disdain, and Comedy left it with him."

**Out of Sympathy With the Age**

It has also been suggested that there may have been some kind of break with Anne Bracegirdle, the actress for whom Congreve had written the parts of Cynthia, Angelica, Almeria (in *The Morning Bride*) and Millamant ; and he may have felt that he had said all he wanted to say in a way that could hardly be bettered. But it is fairly safe to assume that he felt out of sympathy with the temper of the new century. As Pope said, Congreve was 'Ultimas Romanorum'. The success of Collier's diatribe was bad enough ; the applause which greeted *Loves Last Shift* was worse, and it adumbrated the triumph of sentimental comedy. Congreve cannot have been very surprised that audience found *The Way of the World* too astringent ; and when Cibber produced *The Careless Husband*, Congreve told Kealley that the ridiculous town for the most part liked it. But he added, there are some that know better. It is lamentable to think that those who know better have seldom been in a majority since the end of the seventeenth century ; and that more than one modern critic has declared that Congreve is essentially an author who does not know to write for the stage.

# 21

# *The Way Of The World*

**DEDICATION**

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

**PROLOGUE**

**TEXT**
**(With Complete Paraphrase)**

# *The Way Of The World*

## TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

## RALPH, EARL OF MONTAGUE, &c.

My Lord,

Whether the world will arraign me of vanity, or not, that I have presumed to dedicate this comedy to your lordship, I am yet in doubt : though it may be it is some degree of vanity even to doubt of it. One who has at any time had the honour of your lordship's conversation, cannot be supposed to think very meanly of that which he would prefer to your perusal : yet it were to incur the imputation of too much sufficiency, to pretend to such a merit as might abide the test of your lordship's censure.

Whatever value may be wanting to this play while yet it is mine, will be sufficiently made up to it, when it is once become your lordship's ; and it is my security, that I cannot have over-rated it more by my dedication, than your lordship will dignify it by your patronage.

That it succeeded on the stage, was almost beyond my expectation ; for but little of it was prepared for that general taste which seems now to be predominant in the palates of our audience.

Those characters which are meant to be ridiculed in most of our comedies, are of fools so gross, that in my humble opinion, they should rather disturb than divert the well-natured and reflecting part of an audience ; they are rather objects of charity than contempt ; and instead of moving our mirth, they ought very often to excite our compassion.

This reflection moved me to design some characters, which should appear ridiculous not so much through a natural folly (which is incorrigible, and therefore not proper for the stage) as through an affected wit ; a wit, which at the same time that it is affected, is also false. As there is some difficulty in the formation of a character of this nature, so there is some hazard which attends the progress of its success, upon the stage : for many come to a play, so overcharged with criticism, that they very often let fly their censure, when through their rashness they have mistaken their aim. This I had occasion lately to observe : for this play had been acted two or three days before some of these hasty judges could find the leisure to distinguish betwixt the character of a Witwoud and a Truewit.

I must beg your lordship's pardon for this digression from the true course of this epistle ; but that it may not seem altogether impertinent, I beg, that I may plead the occasion of it, in part of that excuse of which I stand in need, for recommending this comedy to

your protection. It is only by the countenance of your lordship, and the *few* so qualified : that such who write with care and pains can hope to be distinguished : for the prostituted name of *poet* promiscuously levels all that bear it.

Terence, the most correct writer in the world, had a Scipio and a Lelius, if not to assist him, at least to support him in his reputation : and notwithstanding his extraordinary merit, it may be, their countenance was not more than necessary.

The purity of his style, the delicacy of his turns, and the justness of his characters, were all of them beauties, which the greater part of his audience were incapable of tasting : some of the coarsest strokes of Plautus, so severely censured by Horace, were more likely to affect the multitude ; such, who come with expectation to laugh at the last act of a play and are better entertained with two or three unseasonable jests, than with the artful solution of the fable.

As Terence excelled in his performances, so had he great advantages to encourage his undertakings ; for he built most on the foundations of Menander : his plots were generally modelled, and his characters ready drawn to his hand. He copied Menander ; and Menander had no less light in the formation of his characters, from the observations of Theophrastus, of whom he was a disciple, and Theophrastus, it is known, was not only the disciple, but the immediate successor of Aristotle, the first and greatest judge of poetry. These were great models to design by ; and the further advantage which Terence possessed, towards giving his plays the due ornaments of purity of style and justness of manners, was not less considerable, from the freedom of conversation, which was permitted him with Lelius and Scipio, two of the greatest and most polite men of his age. And indeed, the privilege of such a conversation is the only certain means of attaining to the perfection of dialogue.

If it has happened in any part of this comedy, that I have gained a turn of style, or expression more correct, or at least more corrigible than in those which I have formerly written, I must, with equal pride and gratitude, ascribe it to the honour of your lordship's admitting me into your conversation, and that of a society where everybody else was so well worthy of you, in your retirement last summer from the town : for it was immediately after, that this comedy was written. If I have failed in my performance, it is only to be regretted, where there were so many, not inferior either to a Scipio or a Lelius, that there should be one wanting, equal in capacity to a Terence.

If I am not mistaken, poetry is almost the only art which has not yet laid claim to your lordship's patronage. Architecture and painting, to the great honour of our country, have flourished under your influence and protection. In the meantime, poetry, the eldest sister of all arts, and parent of most, seems to have resigned her birthright, by having neglected to pay her duty to your lordship ; and by permitting others of a later extraction to prepossess that place in your esteem. to which none can pretend a better title. Poetry, in its nature, is sacred to the good and great ; the relation between

them is reciprocal, and they are ever propitious to it. It is the privilege of poetry to address to them, and it is their prerogative alone to give it protection.

This received maxim is a general apology for all writers who consecrate their labours to great men : but I could wish, at this time, that this address were exempted from the common pretence of all dedications ; and that as I can distinguish your lordship even among the most deserving, so this offering might become remarkable by some particular instance of respect ; which should assure your lordship that I am, with all due sense of your extreme worthiness and humanity,

My Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient
and most obliged humble servant,
*Will. Congreve.*

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

### MEN

*Fainall*, in love with Mrs. *Marwood.*

*Mirabell*, in love with Mrs. *Millamant.*

*Witwoud* } followers of Mrs. *Millamant.*
*Petulant* }

*Sir Wilful Witwoud*, half-brother to *Witwoud*, and nephew to Lady *Wishfort*.

*Waitwell*, servant to *Mirabell*.

### WOMEN

Lady *Wishfort*, enemy to *Mirabell*, for having falsely pretended love to her.

Mrs. *Millamant*, a fine lady, niece to Lady *Wishfort*, and loves *Mirabell*.

Mrs. *Marwood*, friend to Mr. *Fainall*, and likes *Mirabell*.

Mrs. *Fainall*, daughter to Lady *Wishfort*, and wife to Fainall, formerly friend to *Mirabell*.

*Foible*, woman to Lady *Wishfort*.

*Mincing*, woman to Mrs. *Millamant*.

*Betty*, waiting-woman at the Chocolate-house.

*Peg*, waiting-woman to Lady *Wishfort*.

Dancers, Footmen, and Attendants.

### SCENE—LONDON

*The time equal to that of the presentation.*

## PROLOGUE

Of those few fools, who with ill stars are cursed
Sure scribbling fools, called poets, fare the worst :
For they're a sort of fools which Fortune makes,
And after she has made 'em fools, forsakes.
With Nature's oafs 'tis quite a different case,
For Fortune favours all her idiot race :
In her own nest the Cuckoo eggs we find,
O'er which she broods to hatch the Changeling kind.
No portion for her own she has to spare.
So much she doats on her adopted care.

Poets are bubbles, by the town drawn in,
Suffered at first some trifling stakes to win :
But what unequal hazards do they run !
Each time they write they venture all they've won :
The squire that's buttered still, is sure to be undone.
This author, heretofore, has found your favour,
But pleads no merit from his past behaviour.
To build on that might prove a vain presumption,
Should grants to poets made, admit resumption :
And in Parnassus he must lose his seat,
If that be found a forfeited estate.

He owns, with toil, he wrought the following scene
But if they're naught ne'er spare him for his pains :
Damn him the more ; have no commiseration
For dullness on mature deliberation.
He swears he'll not resent one hissed-off scene,
Nor, like those peevish wits, his play maintain,
Who, to assert their sense, your taste arraign.
Some plot we think he has, and some new thought :

Some humour too, no farce ; but that's a fault.
Satire, he thinks, you ought not to expect ;
For so reformed a town, who dares correct ?
To please, this time, has been his sole pretence,
He'll not instruct, lest it should give offence.
Should he by chance a knave or fool expose,
That hurts none here, sure here are none of those.
In short, our play shall (with your leave to show it)
Give you one instance of a passive poet.
Who to your judgments yields all resignation ;
So save or damn, after your own discretion.

## THE WAY OF THE WORLD

### ACT ONE

*A Chocolate-House*

*Mirabell and Fainall rising from cards, Betty waiting.*

***Mira.*** You are a fortunate man, Mr. Fainall.

***Fain.*** Have we done ?

***Mira.*** What you please. I'll play on to entertain you.

***Fain.*** No, I'll give you your revenge another time, when you are not so indifferent ; you are thinking of something else now, and play too negligently ; the coldness of a losing gamester lessens the pleasure of the winner. I'd no more play with a man that slighted his ill fortune, than I'd make love to a woman who undervalued the loss of her reputation.

***Mira.*** You have a taste extremely delicate, and are for refining on your pleasures.

***Fain.*** Prithee, why so reserved ? Something has put you out of humour.

***Mira.*** Not at all : I happen to be grave to-day ; and you are gay ; that's all.

***Fain.*** Confess, Millamant and you quarrelled last night, after I left you ; my fair cousin has some humours that would tempt the patience of a Stoic. What, some coxcomb came in and was well received by her, while you were by ?

***Mira.*** Witwoud and Petulant ; and what was worse, her aunt, your wife's mother, my evil genius ; or to sum up all in her own name, my old Lady Wishfort came in—

***Fain.*** Oh, there it is then—she has a lasting passion for you, and with reason.—What, then my wife was there ?

***Mira.*** Yes, and Mrs. Marwood and three or four more, whom I never saw before ; seeing me, they all put on their grave faces, whispered to one another ; then complained aloud of the vapours, and after fell into a profound silence.

***Fain.*** They had a mind to be rid of you.

***Mira.*** For which reason I resolved not to stir. At last the good old lady broke through her painful taciturnity, with an invective against long visits. I would not have understood her, but Millamant joining in the argument, I rose and with a constrained smile told her I thought nothing was so easy as to know when a visit began to be troublesome ; she reddened, and withdrew, with expecting her reply.

***Fain.*** You were to blame to resent what she spoke only in compliance with her aunt.

***Mira.*** She is more mistress of herself, than to be under the necessity of such a resignation.

***Fain.*** What ? though half her fortune depends upon her marrying with my lady's approbation ?

***Mira.*** I was then in such a humour, that I should have been better pleased if she had been less discreet.

## COMPLETE PARAPHRASE
## ACT ONE

*Scene : A Chocolate House*

*Mirabell and Fainall rising from Cards, Betty waiting*

*Mira.* You are very lucky, you are winning all through.

*Fainall.* Have we finished ?

*Mira.* As you please. On my part I will play on to entertain you.

*Fain.* You are thinking of something else now, and therefore playing very negligently ; when a loser in a game is indifferent, the winner finds no pleasure in playing. I would not like to play with a man that slighted his ill fortune, than I would make love to a woman who does not care to mind the loss of her reputation.

*Mira.* You have an extremely delicate taste and you are very particular about your pleasures.

*Fain.* Why are you so reserved to-day ? Something must have happened to put you out of your humour.

*Mira.* Not at all ; only that I happen to be of grave mood to-day as you seem to be gay, that's all.

*Fain.* Don't hide ; Millamant and you must have quarrelled last night after I left you. Sometimes my beautiful cousin is in such a mood that would anger even the patience of a stoic. Some fool must have come in and must have been well received by her, while you were by her.

*Mira.* Witwoud and Petulant : and what was worse, her aunt, your wife's mother, my evil genius to sum up in other words, my old Lady Wishfort came in too.

*Fain.* Oh, there it is then—she has a lasting passion for you, and with reason. My wife was there too, I suppose ?

*Mira.* Yes, and Mrs. Marwood and three or four more, whom I never saw before. · Seeing me, they all became serious, whispered to one another, then complained loudly about depression of spirit, and fell into a deep silence.

*Fain.* They wanted to avoid you.

*Mira.* For which reason I was determined not to move out. At last the good old lady broke through her painful silence, with an attack against long visits. Millamant also supported her, I got up and with a constrained smile told her that I thought nothing was so easy as to know when a visit began to be troublesome.

*Fain.* She must have said that only to please her aunt.

*Mira.* She is more mistress of herself, and there is no need for her to be under the necessity of such a submission.

*Fain.* What ? do you forget that half her fortune depends upon her marrying with my lady's approval ?

*Mira.* At that time I was in such a mood that I should have been much happier if she had not been so prudent as to comply with her aunt.

*Fain.* Now I remember, I wonder not they were weary of you; last night was one of their cabal-nights; they have 'em three times a week, and meet by turns, at one another's apartments, where they come together like the corner's inquest, to sit upon the murdered reputations of the week. You and I are excluded; and it was once proposed that all the male sex should be excepted; but somebody moved that to avoid scandal there might be one man of the community; upon which motion Witwoud and Petulant were enrolled members.

*Mira.* And who may have been the foundress of this sect? My Lady Wishfort, I warrant, who publishes her detestation of mankind; and full of the vigour of fifty-five, declares for a friend and ratafia; and let posterity shift for itself, she'll breed no more.

*Fain.* The discovery of your sham addresses to her, to conceal your love to her niece, has provoked this separation: had you dissembled better, things might have continued in the state of nature

*Mira.* I did as much as man could, with any reasonable conscience; I proceeded to the very last act of flattery with her, and was guilty of a song in her commendation. Nay, I got a friend to put her into a lampoon, and compliment her with the imputation of an affair with a young fellow, which I carried so far, that I told her the malicious town took notice that she was grown fat of a sudden; and when she lay in of a dropsy, persuaded her she was reported to be in labour. The devil's in't, if an old woman is to be flattered further, unless a man should endeavour downright personally to debauch her; and that my virtue forbade me. But for the discovery of this amour, I am indebted to your friend, or your wife's friend, Mrs. Marwood.

*Fain.* What should provoke her to be your enemy, unless she has made you advances, which you have slighted? Women do not easily forgive omissions of that nature.

*Mira.* She was always civil to me, till of late; I confess I am not one of those coxcombs who are apt to interpret a woman's good manners to her prejudice; and think that she who does not refuse 'em everything, can refuse 'em nothing.

*Fain.* You are a gallant man, Mirabell: and though you may have cruelty enough, not to satisfy a lady's longing, you have too much generosity, not to be tender of her honour. Yet you speak with an indifference which seems to be affected; and confesses you are conscious of a negligence.

*Mira.* You pursue the argument with a distrust that seems to be unaffected, and confesses you are conscious of a concern for which the lady is more indebted to you, than is your wife.

*Fain.* Fie, fie, friend, if you grow censorious I must leave you;— I 'll look upon the gamesters in the next room.

*Mira.* Who are they?

*Fain.* Now I remember. Last night was one of their nights to meet in private and talk scandals ; they have them three times a week, and meet by turns, at one another's apartments. You and I are excluded from these meetings.

*Mira.* And who is the blessed foundress of this sect ? I am sure, it is my Lady Wishfort. With wonderful desire at her age of fifty five, she cannot do without a friend (male) and drink ; luckily she will have no more child.

*Fain* The discovery of your pretended addresses to her to conceal your love to her niece is the cause of her hostile attitude towards you : if you could conceal your real feelings in a little more clever way, things might have continued in a natural way. I went as far as the last act of flattery with her, went to the extent of composing a song in her praise. Not only that, I got a friend to her into a satirical piece, and complemented her with the scandal that she had an affair with a young fellow. I carried the scandal so far, that I told her that wicked people of the town has taken notice of the fact she was grown fat suddenly on account of pregnancy ; and when she lay in bed on account of dropsy (a disease), I persuaded her to believe that she was reported to be in labour. Is it possible to flatter an old woman any further, except, of course, a man goes straight to debauch her personally ? and my virtue did not allow me to do that. But I must tell you that for the discovery of this love-affair of mine, I am indebted to your friend, or rather your wife's friend, Mrs. Marwood.

*Fain.* What was it that provoked Mrs. Marwood to be your enemy like that ? Women do not easily forgive insult of that nature.

*Mira.* She was always very kind to me, till of late. I cannot think that because a woman is polite in manners, she wants that the man should come forward to make love to her.

*Fain.* You are a gallant man, Mirabell : though you may be cruel enough not to satisfy a Lady's desire, you have too much of generosity to see that her honour does not suffer. You pretend to be indifferent about Mrs. Marwood, which you are not ; you know that she made deliberate advances to you and that you rejected these advances.

*Mira.* You are going on with your argument with a distrust that seems to be indifferent, but in reality you seem to be more anxious about Mrs. Marwood than about your wife.

*Fain.* Too bad, too bad, friend ; if you become critical like this I must leave you ; I will rather watch the players at their games in the next room

*Mira.* Who are they (in the next room) ?

*Fain.* Petulant and Witwoud—(*To Betty*). Bring me some chocolate. [*Exit.*

*Mira.* Betty, what says your clock ?

*Bet.* Turned of the last canonical hour, sir. [*Exit.*

*Mira.* How pertinently the jade answers me ! Ha ! almost one a clock ! [*Looking on his watch.*] Oh, y' are come—

*Enter Footman*

*Mira.* Well, is the grand affair over ? You have been something tedious

*Serv.* Sir, there's such coupling at Pancras, that they stand behind one another, as 'twere in a country dance. Ours was the last couple to lead up; and no hopes appearing of dispatch, besides, the parson growing hoarse, we were afraid his lungs would have failed before it came to our turn; so we drove round to Duke's Place; and there they were riveted in a trice.

*Mira.* So, so, you are sure they are married.

*Serv.* Married and bedded, sir : I am witness.

*Mira.* Have you the certificate ?

*Serv.* Here it is, sir.

*Mira.* Has the tailor brought Waitwell's clothes home, and the new liveries ?

*Serv.* Yes, sir.

*Mira* That's well. Do you go home again, d' ye hear, and adjourn the consummation till further order; bid Waitwell shake his ears, and Dame Partlet rustle up her feathers, and meet me at one o'clock by Rosamond's Pond; that I may see her before she returns to her lady : and as you tender your ears be secret. [*Exit Footman.*

*Re-enter Fainall and Betty*

*Fain.* Joy of your success. Mirabell; you look pleased.

*Mira.* Aye ; I have been engaged in a matter of some sort of mirth, which is not yet ripe for discovery. I am glad this is not a cabal-night. I wonder, Fainall, that you who are married, and of consequence, should be discreet, will suffer your wife to be of such a party.

*Fain.* Faith. I am not jealous. Besides, most who are engaged are women and relations; and for the men, they are of a kind too contemptible to give scandal.

*Mira.* I am of another opinion. The greater the coxcomb, always the more the scandal : for a woman who is not a fool, can have but one reason for associating with a man who is one.

*Fain.* Are you jealous as often as you see Witwoud entertained by Millamant ?

*Mira.* Of her understanding I am, if not of her person.

*Fain.* You do her wrong ; for to give her her due, she has wit.

*Mira.* She has beauty enough to make any man think so; and

*Fain.* Petulant and Witwoud—get me some chocolate. (*Exit*)

*Mira.* Betty, what is the time by your clock ?

*Bet.* It is past the canonical hour, Sir (past twelve). (*Exit*)

*Mira.* How the woman answers me to the point ! Ha ! almost one o'clock ! (looking on his watch) Oh, you have come.

*Enter Footman*

*Mira.* Well, is the grand affair over ? You are late.

*Serv.* Sir, there's such a number of marriages at the church of St. Pancras, that they had to stand behind one another, as if it were a county dance. Ours was last couple to lead up ; there was no way of performing the marriages quickly ; the parson's voice became so hoarse, we were afraid that his lungs would fail before it came to our turn ; so we drove round to the church at Duke's Place and there they were united in wedlock in no time.

*Mira.* So, so you are sure they are married.

*Serv.* Married and bedded, sir : I am witness.

*Mira.* Have you got the certificate ?

*Serv.* Here it is, sir.

*Mira.* Has the tailor brought Waitwell's clothes home ?

*Serv.* Yes, sir.

*Mira.* That's well. You go home again, do you hear, and stop their bedding together till further order ; tell Waitwell shake his ears and Dame Partlet (that is Foible) rustle up her feather that is get ready (like a hen), and meet me at one o'clock by Rosamond's pond so that I see her before she returns to her lady. Be careful, I will not mind boxing your ears if you do not keep the secret. (*Exit Footman*)

*Re-enter Fainall and Betty*

*Fain.* Wish you joy at your success ; you look very happy.

*Mira.* I am glad this is not a cabal-night. I am surprised that you who are married, and of consequence, instead of being prudent should allow your wife to be of such a party.

*Fain.* In faith, I am not jealous. Besides, most of those who are engaged in the thing are women and relations ; as for the men, they are not of a kind of any consideration to give rise to any scandal

*Mira.* The greater the fool, always more the risk for scandal ; for a woman, there is only one reason for associating with a man who is a fool. that is to use the fool as a cover to hide her actual love-affair.

*Fain.* Do you get jealous whenever you see Witwoud being entertained by Millamant ?

*Mira.* I am jealous of her understanding ; I am not jealous of her person.

*Fain.* To give her due credit, you must admit that she has wit.

*Mira.* She has beauty enough to make any man think so :

complaisance enough not to contradict him who shall tell her so.

*Fain.* For a passionate lover, methinks you are a man somewhat too discerning in the failings of your mistress.

*Mira.* And for a discerning man, somewhat too passionate a lover; I for like her with her faults; nay; like her for her faults. Her follies are so natural, or so artful that they become her; and those affections which in another woman would be odious, serve but to make her more agreeable. I'll tell thee, Fainall, she once used me with that insolence, that in revenge I took her to pieces; sifted her, and separated her failings; I studied 'em, and got 'em by rote. The catalogue was so large, that I was not without hopes, one day or other, to hate her heartily; to which end I so used myself to think of 'em, that at length, contrary to my design and expectation, they gave me every hour less and less disturbance; till in a few days it became habitual to me, to remember 'em without being displeased. They are now grown as familiar to me as my own frailties: and in all probability in a little time longer I shall like 'em as well.

*Fain.* Marry her, marry her; be half as well acquainted with her charms, as you are with her defects, and my life on't, you are your own man again.

*Mira.* Say you so?

*Fain.* Aye, aye, I have experience: I have a wife, and so forth.

*Enter Messenger*

*Mess.* Is one Squire Witwoud here?

*Bet.* Yes; what's your business?

*Mess.* I have a letter for him, from his brother, Sir Wilful, which I am charged to deliver into his own hands.

*Bet.* He's in the next room, friend—that way.

[*Exit Messenger*

*Mira.* What, is the chief of that noble family in town, Sir Wilful Witwoud?

*Fain.* He is expected to-day. Do you know him?

*Mira.* I have seen him, he promises to be an extraordinary person; I think you have the honour to be related to him.

*Fain.* Yes; he is half-brother to this Witwoud by a former wife, who was sister to my Lady Wishfort, my wife's mother. If you marry Millamant, you must call cousins too.

*Mira.* I had rather be his relation than his acquaintance.

*Fain.* He comes to town in order to equip himself for travel.

*Mira.* For travel! Why the man that I mean is above forty.

*Fain.* No matter for that: 'tis for the honour of England, that all Europe should know we have blockheads of all ages,

*Mira.* I wonder there is not an act of parliament to save the credit of the nation, and prohibit the exportation of fools.

and politeness enough not to contradict him.

*Fain.* In the case of a passionate lover like you, a man becomes more than watchful in feelings of his mistress.

*Mira.* And you must know that a watchful man is somewhat too passionate a lover. You know, I like her with all her faults ; nay, I like her for her faults. Her follies are so natural, or so artistic, that they become her ; and those affectations which in another would be so odious, make her in fact more desirable. I will tell you Fainall, she behaved with me once with so much of insolence, that in revenge, I analysed her character, noting all her weaknesses, and separating her virtues from her faults. I studied them and committed them to my memory. They have now become so familiar with me that they seem to be my own faults ; and there is every possibility that in a little time longer I shall like them as well.

*Fain.* Marry her, marry her ; be half as well familiar with her charms as you are with her defects, and I can bet my life on it that you will be yourself and will not remain a slave to her charms very long.

*Mira* Do you say that ?

*Fain.* Yes, yes, I have experience : I have a wife and I know.

*Enter Messenger*

*Mess.* Is one Squire Witwoud here ?

*Bet.* Yes ; what's your business ?

*Mess.* I have a letter for him, from his brother, Sir Wilful, which I have charged to deliver into his own hands.

*Bet.* He's in the next room, friend—that way.

*(Exit Messenger)*

*Mira.* What, is Sir Wilful Witwoud, the head of that noble family in town ?

*Fain.* He is expected to-day. Do you know him ?

*Mira.* I have seen him. He promises to be an extraordinary person. I think you are related to him.

*Fain.* Yes ; he is half-brother to this Witwoud by a former wife, who was sister to my Lady Wishfort, my wife's mother. If you marry Millamant, you must call him your cousin.

*Mira.* I would rather be his relation than his acquaintance.

*Fain.* He comes to town in order to acquaint himself with fashionable life before he starts on a travel.

*Mira.* For travel ! Why, the man is above forty.

*Fain.* Nothing wrong with that. All Europe should know that we have blockheads of all ages.

*Mira.* I am surprised that there is no act of Parliament to save the reputation of the nation, and prohibit the exportation of fools.

*Fain.* By no means, 'tis better as 'tis ; 'tis better to trade with a little loss, than to be quite eaten up, with being overstocked.

*Mira.* Pray, are the follies of this knight-errant, and those of the squire his brother, anything related ?

*Fain.* Not at all : Witwoud grows by the knight, like a medlar grafted on a crab. One will melt in your mouth ; and t' other set your teeth on edge ; one is all pulp, and the other all core.

*Mira.* So one will be rotten before he be ripe, and the other will be rotten without ever being ripe at all.

*Fain.* Sir Wilful is an odd mixture of bashfulness and obstinacy.—But when he's drunk, he's as loving as the monster in the *Tempest* ; and much after the same manner. To give t' other his due, he has something of good nature, and does not always want wit.

*Mira.* Not always ; but as often as his memory fails him, and his commonplace of comparison. He is a fool with a good memory, and some few scraps of other folks' wit. He is one whose conversation can never be approved, yet it is now and then to be endured. He has indeed one good quality, he is not exceptions : for he so passionately affects the reputation of understanding raillery, that he will construe an affront into a jest ; and call downright rudeness and ill language, satire and fire.

*Fain.* If you have a mind to finish his picture, you have an opportunity to do it at full length. Behold the original.

*Enter Witwoud*

*Wit.* Afford me your compassion, my dears ; pity me, Fainall, Mirabell, pity me.

*Mira.* I do from my soul.

*Fain.* Why, what's the matter ?

*Wit.* No letters for me, Betty ?

*Bet.* Did not a messenger bring you one but now, sir ?

*Wit.* Ay, but no other ?

*Bet.* No, sir.

*Wit.* That's hard, that's very hard ;—a messenger, a mule, a beast of burden, he has brought me a letter from the fool my brother, as heavy as a panegyric in a funeral sermon, or a copy of commendatory verses from one poet to another. And what's worse, 'tis as sure a forerunner of the author, as an epistle dedicatory.

*Mira.* A fool, and your brother, Witwoud !

*Wit.* Aye, aye, my half-brother. My half-brother he is, no nearer upon honour.

*Mira.* Then 'tis possible he may be but half a fool.

*Wit.* Good, good, Mirabell, *le drole* ! Good, good, hang him, don't

*Fain.* By no means it should be there ; it is better as it is ; it is better to trade with little loss, than to be completely ruined with being overstocked with fools.

*Mira.* Please tell me, are the follies of this wandering knight, and those of the squire his brother, of the same kind ?

*Fain.* Not at all ; Witwoud has the same relation to the Knight as the apple grafted on a crab ; the medlar, the rotten one melts in the mouth when eaten. The other, the the crab apple, which is sour, sets the teeth on edge : one is all pulp, the other is all core.

*Mira.* So one will be rotten before he is ripe, and the other will be rotten without being ripe at all.

*Fain.* Sir Wilful is an odd mixture of bashfulness and obstinacy.—But when he is drunk, he is as loving as the monster in *The Tempest* (that is Caliban). To give the other, Witwoud, his credit, he has something of good nature, and is not without wit always.

*Mira.* Not always, but as often as his memory fails him, and his commonplace of comparisons. He so passionately pretends to the reputation of understanding jokes, that he would rather take an insult as a joke : he will rather call downright rudeness and harsh language, satire and joke.

*Fain.* If you have a mind to finish his picture, you have an opportunity here to do it at full length. Now look at the original before you.

*Enter Witwoud*

*Wit.* Offer me your compassion, my dears ; pity me, Fainall, Mirabell, pity me.

*Mira.* I do pity you from my soul.

*Fain.* Why, what is the matter ?

*Wit.* Is there no letters for me, Betty ?

*Bet.* Did not a messenger get one for you only just now ?

*Wit.* Yes, but is there no other ?

*Bet.* No, sir.

*Wit.* That is very hard, that is very hard ; the messenger is a mule, a beast of burden to have brought me a letter from the fool my brother. And what is worse, the letter is soon followed by the person himself as it happens in the case of a letter of dedication soon followed by the visit of the author himself.

*Mira.* A fool and your brother, Witwoud.

*Wit.* Yes, yes, my half-brother. He is not nearer related to me than as my half-brother, upon honour.

*Wit.* Then it it possible that he is only half a fool !

*Wit.* Good, good, Mirabell, it is a good joke ! Good, good hang him, don't.

let's talk of him. Fainall, how does your lady ? Gad ! I say anything in the world to get this fellow out of my head. I beg pardon that I should ask a man of pleasure, and the town, a question at once so foreign and domestic. But I talk like an old maid at a marriage, I don't know what I say but she's the best woman in the world.

*Fain.* 'Tis well you don't know what you say, or else your commendation would go near to make me either vain or jealous.

*Wit.* No man in town lives well with a wife but Fainall. Your judgment, Mirabell ?

*Mira.* You had better step and ask his wife, if you would be credibly informed.

*Wit.* Mirabell.

*Mira.* Aye ?

*Wit.* My dear, I ask ten thousand pardons.—Gad I have forgot what I was going to say to you.

*Mira.* I thank you heartily, heartily.

*Wit.* No ; but prithee excuse me. My memory is such a memory.

*Mira.* Have a care of such apologies, Witwoud ; for I never knew a fool but he affected to complain, either of the spleen or his memory.

*Fain.* What have you done with Petulant ?

*Wit.* He's reckoning his money ; my money it was—I have no luck to-day.

*Fain* You may allow him to win of you at play, for you are sure to be too hard for him at repartee : since you monopolize the wit that is between you, the fortune must be his of course.

*Mira.* I don't find that Petulant confesses the superiority of wit to be your talent, Witwoud.

*Wit.* Come, come, you are malicious now, and would breed debates. Petulant's my friend, and a very honest fellow, and a very pretty fellow, and has a smattering, faith and troth a pretty deal of an odd sort of a small wit. Nay, I'll do him justice. I'm his friend, I won't wrong him. And if he had any judgment in the world, he would not be altogether contemptible. Come, come, don't detract from the merits of my friend.

*Fain.* You don't take your friend to be over-nicely bred ?

*Wit.* No, no, hang him, the rogue has no manners at all, that I must own—no more breeding than a bum-bailey, that I grant you,—'tis pity ; the fellow has fire and life.

*Mira.* What, courage ?

*Wit.* Hum, faith, I don't know as to that ; I can't say as to that. Yes, faith, in a controversy he'll contradict anybody.

*Mira.* Though 'twere a man whom he feared, or a woman whom he loved

let us talk about him. Fainall, how is your lady ? God ! I would talk of anything in the world to get this fellow out of my head. I am sorry that I should ask a man of pleasure, and a man of town, a question at once so unconnected and domestic. But I talk like an old maid at a marriage ; I don't know what I say : but there is no doubt that she is the best woman in the world.

*Fain.* It is well that you don't know what you say, e rlse your commendation would go as near as to make eñner proud or jealous.

*Wit.* No man in the town lives so happily with his wife than Fainall. What is your opinion, Mirabell.

*Mira.* You would better go and ask his wife if you want to know about it surely.

*Wit.* Mirabell.

*Mira.* Yes ?

*Wit.* My dear, I ask for ten thousand pardons. By God I have forgotten what I was going to say to you.

*Mira.* I thank you heartily, heartily.

*Wit.* No, but please excuse me. My memory is so unreliable.

*Mira.* Be careful of such apologies, Witwoud ; for I never knew a fool who did not but pretend to complain either of ill-tempered melancholy or his memory.

*Fain* What have you done with Petulant.

*Wit.* He is counting his money ; I have no luck to-day.

*Fain* You may allow him to win you at play, for you are sure to be too hard at witty retorts : since you have more wit, you should not grudge him fortune at gambling.

*Mira.* I don't find that Petulant confesses the superiority of wit to be your talent, Witwoud.

*Wit.* Petulant is a friend of mine. He is a very honest fellow and a very good fellow. He has, in truth, a slight superficial knowledge and a pretty deal of an odd sort of a small wit. I am his friend, I won't do him any wrong. He has in fact no judgment in the world, and therefore he is contemptible. Come, come, don't let me say anything against the merit of my friend.

*Fain.* You don't take your friend to be brought up in good manners.

*Wit.* No, no, hang him, the rogue has no manners at all, that I must admit—he has no more good breeding than a bailiff's agent (who is generally rude and without manners), I must say. It is a pity that the fellow has much fire and life.

*Mira.* What about courage ?

*Wit.* Hum, in faith, I don't know anything about that ; I can't say anything about that. Yes, in faith, in an argument, he will oppose anybody.

*Mira.* It may even be a man whom he feared, or a woman whom he loved.

*Wit.* Well, well, he does not always think before he speaks. We have all our failings; you are too hard upon him, you are, faith. Let me excuse him,—I can defend most of his faults, except one or two: one he has, that's the truth on't, if he were my brother, I could not acquit him—that indeed I could wish were otherwise.

*Mira* Aye marry, what's that, Witwoud?

*Wit.* O pardon me—expose the infirmities of my friend. No, my dear, excuse me there.

*Fain.* What I warrant he's unsincere, or 'tis some such trifle.

*Wit.* No, no, what if he be? 'Tis no matter for that, his wit will excuse that: a wit should no more be sincere, than a woman constant; one argues a decay of parts, as t' other of beauty.

*Mira.* Maybe you think him too positive?

*Wit.* No, no, his being positive is an incentive to argument, and keeps up conversation.

*Fain.* Too illiterate.

*Wit.* That! that's his happiness—his want of learning gives him the more opportunities to show his natural parts.

*Mira.* He wants words

*Wit.* Aye; but I like him for that now; for his want of words gives me the pleasure very often to explain his meaning.

*Fain.* He's impudent.

*Wit.* No, that's not it.

*Mira.* Vain.

*Wit.* No.

*Mira.* What, he speaks unseasonable truths sometimes, because he has not wit enough to invent an evasion.

*Wit.* Truths! Ha, ha ha! No, no, since you will have it,—I mean he never speaks truth at all,—that's all. He will lie like a chambermaid, or a woman of quality's porter. Now that is a fault.

*Enter Coachman*

*Coach.* Is master Petulant here, mistress?

*Bet.* Yes.

*Coach.* Three gentlewomen in a coach would speak with him.

*Fain.* O brave Petulant, three!

*Bet.* I'll tell him.

*Coach.* You must bring two dishes of chocolate and a glass of cinnamon water.

[*Exeunt Coachman and Betty.*

*Wit.* That should be for two fasting strumpets, and a bawd troubled with wind. Now you may know what the three are.

*Mira.* You are very free with your friend's acquaintance.

*Wit.* Well, well, he does not always think before he speaks. We have all our failings ; in faith, you are too hard upon him, you are too hard. Let me defend him—I can defend most of his faults, excepting one or two ; one he has, that's the truth of it, even if he were my brother I could not pardon him for that. I wish that he did not have that particular fault.

*Mira.* Yes, by Mary, what is that Witwoud ?

*Wit.* Oh, pardon me—should I expose the weakness of my friend ? No, my dear, excuse me there.

*Fain.* What I may presume is that he is insincere, it is some such small matters.

*Wit.* No, no, what if he is ? A wit should be no more sincere than a woman be constant. One tells of deficiency of wit and the other of beauty.

*Mira.* May be, you think him too obstinate in sticking to his opinion ?

*Wit.* No, no, his being obstinate is an encouragement to him and it helps him to keep up conversation.

*Fain.* He is too illiterate

*Wit.* That ! That is his happiness. His want of learning gives him the more opportunities to show his natural qualities.

*Mira.* His words fail him.

*Wit.* Yes, but I like him for that, because his want of words very often gives me the pleasure to explain his meaning.

*Fain.* He is impudent.

*Wit.* No, that he is not.

*Mira.* Vain.

*Wit.* No.

*Mira.* You must admit that he speaks unreasonable truth sometimes, because he does not have wisdom enough to know how to evade issues.

*Wit.* Truths ! ha, ha, ha, ! No, no, since you will have it, I mean, he never speaks truth at all,—that's all. He will go on lying like a chambermaid, or woman of quality's porter. Now that must be considered a fault.

*Enter Coachman*

*Coach.* Is Master Petulant here, mistress ?

*Bet.* Yes.

*Coach.* There are three ladies in a coach who would like to speak to him.

*Fain.* O brave Petulant, there are three women for you.

*Bet.* I'll tell him.

*Coach.* You must bring two dishes of chocolate and a glass of cinnamon water. (*Exeunt Coachman and Betty.*

*Wit.* That should be for two fasting prostitutes and a bawd. Now, you may know what the three are.

*Mira.* You are very free with your friend's acquaintance.

*Wit.* Aye, aye: friendship without freedom is as dull as love without enjoyment, or wine without toasting; but to tell you a secret, these are trulls whom he allows coach-hire, and something more by the week, to call on him once a day at public places.

*Mira.* How!

*Wit.* You shall see he won't go to 'em because there's no more company here to take notice of him. Why this is nothing to what he used to do. Before he found out this way, I have known him call for himself.

*Fain.* Call for himself? What dost thou mean?

*Wit.* Mean, why he would slip you out of this chocolate-house, just when you had been talking to him—as soon as your back was turned—whip he was gone;—then trip to his lodging, clap on a hood and scarf, and a mask, slap into a hackney-coach, and drive hither to the door again in a trice; where he would send in for himself, that I mean, call for himself, wait for himself, nay and what's more, not finding himself, sometimes leave a letter for himself.

*Mira.* I confess this is something extraordinary—I believe he waits for himself now, he is so long a coming. Oh, I ask his pardon.

*Enter Petulant and Betty*

*Bet.* Sir, the coach stays.

*Pet.* Well, well; I come,—'Sbud a man had as good be a professed midwife, as a professed whoremaster, at this rate; to be knocked up and raised at all hours, and in all places. Pox on 'em, I won't come. D'ye hear, tell 'em I won't come. Let 'em snivel and cry their hearts out.

*Fain.* You are very cruel, Petulant.

*Pet.* All's one, let it pass—I have a humour to be cruel.

*Mira.* I hope they are not persons of condition that you use at this rate.

*Pet.* Condition, condition's a dried fig, if I am not in humour. By this hand, if they were your—a—a—your what-dee-call-'ems themselves, they must wait or rub off, if I want appetite.

*Mira.* What-dee-call-'ems? What are they, Witwoud?

*Wit.* Empresses, my dear.—By your what-dee-call-'ems he means sultana queens.

*Pet.* Aye, Roxolanas.

*Mira.* Cry you mercy.

*Fain.* Witwoud says they are—

*Pet.* What does he say th' are?

*Wit.* I? fine ladies I say.

*Pet.* Pass on, Witwoud. Harkee, by this light his relations—two co-heiresses his cousins, and an old aunt, who loves caterwauling better than a conventicle.

*Wit.* Yes, yes : friendship without freedom is as dull as love without enjoyment, or wine without toasting : but to tell you a secret, these are base women for whom he pays coach-fare, and something more every week, to call on him once a day at public places.

*Mira.* How !

*Wit.* You shall see he won't go to them. Why this is nothing to what he used to do. Before he found out this way, I have known him call for himself.

*Fain.* Call for himself ? what do you mean ?

*Wit.* What I mean is that, he would slip out of this chocolate house, just when you had been talking to him—as soon as back was turned—suddenly he vanished ;—then he would go to his lodging, clap on a hood and scarf, and a mask, get into a hackney coach, and drive here to the door again very soon where he would send for himself, that I mean, call for himself, wait for himself, nay and what is more, not finding himself, sometimes leave a letter for himself.

*Mira.* I believe he waits for himself now, he is taking such a long time to come. Oh, I ask his pardon.

*Enter Petulant and Betty*

*Bet.* Sir, the coach is waiting

*Pet.* Well, well, I am coming.—'Sbud (swearing an oath) a man had as good be a professional midwife, as a professional whoremaster, at this rate ; to be called up and raised at all hours, and in all places. Pox on them, I won't come. Do you hear, tell them, I won't come. Let them weep or cry their hearts out.

*Fain.* You are very cruel, Petulant.

*Pet.* I have a humour to be cruel.

*Mira.* I hope that they are not persons of condition (high people) that you are using them like this ?

*Pet.* Condition ? I don't care for condition, when I am not in my mood. By this hand, if they were your—a—a—your what-do-your-call-them's they must wait or get away, if I am not in mood.

*Mira.* What-do-you-call-them's ! What are they, Witwoud ?

*Wit.* Empresses, my dear—by our what-do-you-call-them's he means sultana queens.

*Pet.* Yes, Roxalanas.

*Mira.* Thank you.

*Fain.* Witwoud says they are.

*Pet.* What does he say they are ?

*Wit.* I ? I said that they are fine ladies.

*Pet.* Tell them, Witwoud. Hear me, by this light, they are his relations—two co-heiress his cousins, and an old aunt, who loves quarrelling better than religious assemblies.

*Wit.* Ha, ha, ha! I had a mind to see how the rogue would come off. Ha, ha, ha! Gad, I can't be angry with him, if he had said they were my mother and my sisters.

*Mira.* No!

*Wit.* No; the rogue's wit and readiness of invention charm me, dear Petulant.

*Bet.* They are gone, sir, in great anger.

*Pet.* Enough, let 'em trundle. Anger helps complexion, saves paint.

*Fain.* This continence is all dissembled; this is in order to have something to brag of the next time, he makes court to Millamant, and swear he has abandoned the whole sex for her sake.

*Mira.* Have you not left off your impudent pretensions there yet? I shall cut your throat, some time or other, Petulant, about that business.

*Pet.* Aye, aye, let that pass—there are other throats to be cut.

*Mira.* Meaning mine, sir?

*Pet.* Not I—I mean nobody—I know nothing. But there are uncles and nephews in the world—and they may be rivals. —What then? All 's one for that.

*Mira.* How! Harkee, Petulant, come hither. Explain, or I shall call your interpreter.

*Pet.* Explain? I know nothing. Why, you have an uncle, have you not, lately come to town, and lodges by my Lady Wishfort's?

*Mira.* True.

*Pet.* Why that's enough—you and he are not friends; and if he should marry and have a child, you may be disinherited, ha?

*Mira.* Where hast thou stumbled upon all this truth?

*Pet.* All 's one for that: why then say I know something.

*Mira.* Come, thou art an honest fellow, Petulant, and shalt make love to my mistress, thou shalt, faith. What hast thou heard of my uncle?

*Pet.* I? nothing I. If throats are to be cut, let swords clash; snug's the word, I shrug and am silent.

*Mira.* Oh raillery, raillery. Come, I know thou art in the women's secrets. What, you 're a cabalist, I know you stayed at Millamant's last night, after I went. Was there any mention made of my uncle or me? Tell me: if thou hadst but good nature equal to thy wit, Petulant, Tony Witwoud, who is now thy competitor in fame, would show as dim by thee as a dead whiting's eye by a pearl of Orient; he would no more be seen by thee, than Mercury is by the sun. Come, I 'm sure thou won't tell me.

*Wit.* Ha, ha, ha ! I had mind to see how the rogue comes off, ha, ha, ha ! by God, I cannot be angry with him, even if he had said that they were my mother and my sisters.

*Mira.* No !

*Wit.* No ; the rogue's wit and readiness of invention charm me, dear Petulant.

*Bet.* They are gone, sir, in great anger.

*Pet.* Enough, let them roll on. Anger helps complexion and saves cosmetics.

*Fain.* This continence is all pretensions ; this is in order to have something to boast of the next time he makes love to Millamant, and swear he has abandoned. the whole sex for her sake.

*Mira.* Have you not stopped your impudent pretensions there yet ? I shall cut your throat sometime or other, Petulant.

*Pet.* Yes, yes, let that pass—there are other throats to be cut.

*Mira.* Meaning mine, Sir ?

*Pet.* Not I—I mean nobody—I know nothing. But there are uncles and nephews in the world—and they may be rivals. What then ? All is one for that.

*Mira.* How ; Hear, Petulent, come here. Explain, or I shall cut your throat.

*Pet.* Explain ? I know nothing. Why, you have an uncle, have you not, lately come to town, who is living by my Lady Wishfort's place ?

*Mira.* True.

*Pet.* Why, that is enough—you and he are not friends, and if he should marry and have a child, you may be disinherited, ha ?

*Mira.* Where have you come across all this information ?

*Pet.* All's one for that ; why they say I know something.

*Mira.* Come, you are an honest fellow, Petulant, and I will allow you to make love to my mistress' you will make love to her in faith. Tell me, what have you heard of my uncle ?

*Pet.* I ? I have heard nothing. If throats are to be cut, lest sword clash. I would rather remain quiet. I shrug and I am silent.

*Mira.* Oh, raillery, raillery (mockery) Come, I know you are in the women's secrets. What, you are cabalist, I know you stayed at Millamant's last night, after I went away. Was there any mention made of my uncle or me ? Tell me ; if you had but good nature as much as have wit, Petulant, Tony Witwoud, who is now your competitor in fame, would show as dim by your side as a dead sea fish by a pearl of Orient ; he would no more be seen by your side, than Mercury is seen by the Sun. Come, I am sure, you will tell me.

*Pet.* If I do, will you grant me commonsense then, for the future?

*Mira.* Faith, I 'll do what I can for thee, and I 'll pray that Heaven may grant it thee in the meantime.

*Pet.* Well, harkee.

[*Mirabell and Petulant whisper apart*

*Fain.* Petulant and you both will find Mirabell as warm a rival as a lover.

*Wit.* Pshaw, pshaw, that she laughs at Petulant is plain. And for my pa't—but that it is almost a fashion to admire her, I should—harkee—to tell you a secret, but let it go no further—between friends, I shall never break my heart for her.

*Fain.* How!

*Wit.* She's handsome; but she's a sort of an uncertain woman.

*Fain.* I thought you had died for her.

*Wit.* Umph—no.

*Fain.* She has wit.

*Wit.* 'Tis what she will hardly allow anybody else. Now, demme I should hate that, if she were as handsome as Cleopatra. Mirabell is not so sure of her as he thinks for.

*Fain.* Why do you think so?

*Wit.* We stayed pretty late there last night: and heard something of an uncle to Mirabell, who is lately come to town, and is between him and the best part of his estate; Mirabell and he are at some distance, as my Lady Wishfort has been told; and you know she hates Mirabell, worse than a Quaker hates a parrot, or than a fishmonger hates a hard frost. Whether this uncle has seen Mrs. Millamant or not, I cannot say, but there were items of such a treaty being in embryo; and if it should come to life, poor Mirabell would be in some sort unfortunately fobbed i' faith.

*Fain.* 'Tis impossible Millamant should hearken to it.

*Wit.* Faith, my dear, I can't tell; she's a woman and a kind of a humorist.

[*Fainall and Witwoud whisper apart*

*Mira.* And this is the sum of what you could collect last night?

*Pet.* The quintessence. Maybe Witwould knows more, he stayed longer. Besides they never mind him; they say anything before him.

*Mira.* I thought you had been the greatest favourite.

*Pet.* Aye, *tete-a-tete*; but not in public, because I make remarks.

*Mira.* You do?

*Pet.* Aye, aye, pox I'm malicious, man. Now he's soft, you know, they are not in awe of him.—The fellow's well bred, he 's what you call a—what-d'ye-call-'em. A fine gentleman, but he's silly withal.

*Pet.* If I do, will you grant me common sense then, for the future?

*Mira.* In faith I will do what I can for you, and I will pray that Heaven may grant it to you in the meantime.

*Pet.* Well, you may hear it.

*Fain* Petulant and you both will find Mirabell as warm a rival as a lover.

*Wit.* Pshaw, pshaw, that she laughs at Petulant is clear. And for my part—I shall never break my hearts for her.

*Fain.* How ?

*Wit.* She is handsome ; but she is a sort of an uncertain woman.

*Fain.* I thought you were in love with her.

*Wit.* Umph—

*Fain.* She has wit.

*Wit.* It is what she will hardly allow anybody else—Now, damn, I should hate that, if she were as handsome as Cleopatra. Mirabell is not so sure of her as he thinks for.

*Fain.* Why do you think so ?

*Wit.* We stayed pretty late there last night ; and heard something of an uncle to Mirabell, who has lately come to town, and who is between him and the best part of his estate. Mirabell and he are not in good terms, as my Lady Wishfort has been told ; and you know she hates Mirabell, worse than a Quaker hates a parrot, or than a fishmonger hates a hard frost. Whether this uncle has seen Mrs Millamant or not, I cannot say ; but there is slight rumour afloat of a marriage which, if materialises, would hit Mirabell very hard. If it should come to life, poor Mirabell would be in some sort unfortunately cheated, in faith.

*Fain.* It is impossible that Millamant have heard of this.

*Wit.* In faith, my dear, I can't say ; she is a woman and a woman of moods.

*Mira.* And this is the sum of what you could collect last night ?

*Pet.* The quintessence. May be Witwoud knows more as he stayed longer. Besides they never care him ; they say anything before him.

*Mira.* I thought you had been the greatest favourite.

*Pet.* Yes, in private conversation, but not in public, because I make remarks.

*Mira.* You do ?

*Pet.* Yes, yes, pox I am malicious, man. Now, he keeps silent, you know. So they are not afraid of him—the fellow is well bred, he is what you call a—what-do-you-call-them—a fine gentleman. But at the same time he is very silly.

*Mira.* I thank you. I know as much as my curiosity requires. (*Loudly*) Fainall, are you for the Mall ?

*Fain.* Aye, I 'll take a turn before dinner.

*Wit.* Aye, we 'll all walk in the Park, the ladies talked of being there.

*Mira.* I thought you were obliged to watch for your brother Sir Wilful's arrival.

*Wit.* No, no, he comes to his aunt's, my Lady Wishfort : pox on him. I shall be troubled with him too ; what shall I do with the fool ?

*Pet.* Beg him for his estate ; that I may beg you afterwards ; and so have but one trouble with you both.

*Wit.* O rare Petulent ; thou art as quick as fire in a frosty morning : thou shalt to the Mall with us ; and we'll be very severe.

*Pet.* Enough, I 'm in a humour to be severe

*Mira.* Are you ? Pray then walk by yourselves. Let not us be accessory to your putting the ladies out of countenance, with your senseless ribaldry ; which you roar out aloud as often as they pass by you ; and when you have made a handsome woman blush, then you think you have been severe.

*Pet.* What, what ? Then let 'em either show their innocence by not understanding what they hear, or else show their discretion by not hearing what they would not be thought to understand.

*Mira.* But hast not thou then sense enough to know that thou ought'st to be most ashamed of thyself, when thou hast put another out of countenance ?

*Pet.* Not I, by this hand—I always take blushing either for a sign of guilt, or ill breeding.

*Mira.* I confess you ought to think so. You are in the right, that you may plead the error of your judgment in defence of your practice.

Where modesty's ill manners, 'tis but fit
That impudence and malice pass for wit,

[*Exeunt.*

*Mira.* I thank you. I have come to know as my curiosity requires. Fainall, are you going towards the Mall ?

*Fain.* Yes, I will take a turn before dinner.

*Wit.* Yes, we will all walk in the Park, the ladies are also expected to be going there.

*Mira.* I thought you were obliged to watch for your brother Sir Wilful's arrival.

*Wit.* No, no, he comes to his aunt's house my Lady Wishfort's ; pox on him, I shall have lots of trouble because of him too ; what shall I do with the fool ?

*Pet,* Beg him for his estate, so that I may beg of you afterwards ; that way I share with your trouble.

*Wit.* Oh rare Petulant ; you are as quick as fire in a frosty morning ; you shall go to the Mall with us ; and we may be very critical there.

*Pet.* Enough, I am in a mood to be critical.

*Mira.* Are you ? pray then walk by yourself. Let us not be contributories for your putting the ladies out of countenance, for making indecent remarks which you roar out aloud as often as they pass by you ; and when you have made a handsome woman blush, then you think you have been severe.

*Pet.* What, what ? then let them either show their innocence by not understanding what they hear. Or else let them show their discretion by not hearing what they would not be thought to understand.

*Mira.* But have you not then sense enough to know that you ought to be most ashamed of yourself, when you have another blush for shame ?

*Pet.* Not I, by this hand—I always take blushing either for a sign of guilt, or of ill breeding.

*Mira.* I confess, you should think so. You are in the right ; and you cite your wrong judgement to show that you are right in putting the ladies to their blushes. As it is said, it is wrong to consider modesty as ill manners. So they take impertinence and cite it as wit.

(*Exeunt*)

## ACT TWO

*St. James's Park*

*Enter Mrs. Fainall and Marwood*

*Mrs. Fain.* Aye, aye, dear Marwood, if we will be happy, we must find the means in ourselves, and among ourselves. Men are ever in extremes; either doting, or averse. While they are lovers, if they have fire and sense, their jealousies are insupportable: and when they cease to love (we ought to think at least) they loathe; they look upon us with horror and distaste; they meet us like the ghosts of what we were, and as from such, fly from us.

*Mrs. Mar.* True, 'tis an unhappy circumstance of life, that love should ever die before us: and that the man so often should outlive the lover. But say what you will, 'tis better to be left, than never to have been loved. To pass our youth in dull indifference, to refuse the sweets of life because they once must leave us, is as preposterous as to wish to have been born old, because we one day must be old. For may part, my youth may wear and waste, but it shall never rust in my possession.

*Mrs. Fain.* Then it seems you dissemble an aversion to mankind, only in compliance to my mother's humour.

*Mrs. Mar.* Certainly. To be free; I have no taste of those insipid dry discourses, with which our sex of force must entertain themselves, apart from men. We may affect endearments to each other, profess eternal friendships, and seem to dote like lovers; but 'tis not in our natures long to persevere. Love will resume his empire in our breasts; and every heart, or soon or late, receive and readmit him as its lawful tyrant.

*Mrs. Fain.* Bless me, how have I been deceived! Why, you profess a libertine.

*Mrs. Mar.* You see my friendship by my freedom. Come, be as sincere, acknowledge that your sentiments agree with mine.

*Mrs. Fain.* Never.

*Mrs. Mar.* You hate mankind?

*Mrs. Fain.* Heartily, inveterately.

*Mrs. Mar.* Your husband?

*Mrs. Fain.* Most transcendently; aye, though I say it, meritoriously.

*Mrs. Mar.* Give me your hand upon it.

*Mrs. Fain.* There.

*Mrs. Mar.* I join with you; what I have said has been to try you.

*Mrs. Fain.* Is it possible? Dost thou hate those vipers, men?

*Mrs. Mar.* I have done hating 'em, and am now come to despise 'em; the next thing I have to do, is eternally to forget 'em.

## ACT TWO

*Scene ; St. James's Park*

*Enter Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood*

***Mrs. Fain.*** Yes, yes, dear Marwood, if we want to be happy, we must find the way ourselves, and among ourselves. Men are always in the extremes : either excessively fond or averse. While they are lovers, if they have passion and sense, their jealousies are insupportable : and when they stop loving they start hating ; they look down upon us they meet us as if we have turned ghosts of what we were, and therefore run away from us.

***Mrs. Mar.*** That is true ; it is an unhappy situation in life, that love should cease while we are living and the man should live after his love has grown cold. But whatever you say, it is better to be deserted by a lover than never to have been loved. To spend our youth in dull indifference, to refuse the sweets of life because they once must desert us, is as absurd as to wish to have been born old. For my part, I may lose my youth and beauty as I grow old, but as long as I have youth, I will not stop enjoying the pleasures it offers.

***Mrs. Fain.*** Then it seems you pretend an aversion to mankind in order to please my mother.

***Mrs. Mar.*** Certainly. To be frank, I have no taste for those dull conversations, cabal-nights, with which our sex entertain themselves rather forcibly, away from men. We may pretend love to each other, and protest of eternal friendships. Love will however reestablish its empire in our breasts, and receive and readmit our lover as the lawful tyrant of our heart.

***Mrs. Fain.*** Bless me. I am really surprised at what you are saying. You are talking like a libertine.

***Mrs. Mar.*** You see, I am very frank with you because I love you. Come, be as sincere as I am and admit that your sentiments are exactly like those of mine.

***Mrs. Fain.*** Never.

***Mrs. Mar.*** Do you hate men ?

***Mrs. Fain.*** Heartily, rather incorrigibly.

***Mrs. Mar.*** Do you hate your husband ?

***Mrs. Fain.*** Yes, very much , and I say that he deserves this hatred from me..

***Mrs. Mar.*** Give me your hand upon it.

***Mrs. Fain.*** There.

***Mrs. Mar.*** I join with you ; what I have said was just to test you.

***Mrs. Fain.*** Is it possible ? Do you hate those snake-like men ?

***Mrs. Mar.*** I have finished hating them. , Now I have started treating them with contempt The next thing I am going to do is to forget them for all time to come.

*Mrs. Fain.* There spoke the spirit of an Amazon a Penthesilea.

*Mrs. Mar.* And yet I am thinking sometimes to carry my aversion further.

*Mrs. Fain.* How?

*Mrs. Mar.* Faith, by marrying; if I could but find one that loved me very well, and would be thoroughly sensible of ill usage, I think I should do myself the violence of undergoing the ceremony.

*Mrs. Fain.* You would not make him a cuckold?

*Mrs. Mar.* No; but I 'd make him believe I did, and that 's as bad.

*Mrs. Fain.* Why had not you as good do it?

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, if he should ever discover it, he would then know the worst, and be out of his pain; but I would have him ever to continue upon the rack of fear and jealousy.

*Mrs. Fain.* Ingenious mischief! Would thou wert married to Mirabell.

*Mrs. Mar.* Would I were.

*Mrs. Fain.* You change colour.

*Mrs. Mar.* Because I hate him.

*Mrs. Fain.* So do I; but I can hear him named. But what reason have you to hate him in particular?

*Mrs. Mar.* I never loved him; he is, and always was, insufferably proud.

*Mrs. Fain.* By the reason you give for your aversion, one would think it dissembled; for you have laid a fault to his charge of which his enemies must acquit him.

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, then it seems you are one of his favourable enemies. Methinks you look a little pale, and now you flush again.

*Mrs. Fain.* Do I? I think I am a little sick o' the sudden.

*Mrs. Mar.* What ails you?

*Mrs. Fain.* My husband. Don't you see him? He turned short upon me unawares, and had almost overcome me.

*Enter Fainall and Mirabell*

*Mrs. Mar.* Ha, ha! he comes opportunely for you.

*Mrs. Fain.* For you, for he has brought Mirabell with him.

*Fain.* My dear.

*Mrs. Fain.* My soul.

*Fain.* You don't look well to-day, child.

*Mrs. Fain.* D'ye think so?

*Mira.* He is the only man that does, madam.

*Mrs. Fain.* The only man that would tell me so at least; and the

*Mrs. Fain.* There speaks in you the Queen of the Amazons, a Panthesilea.

*Mrs. Mar.* And yet I am thinking sometimes to carry my hatred further.

*Mrs. Fain.* How ?

*Mrs. Mar.* In faith, by marrying ; if I could find one person that loved me very well, and who would be thoroughly ready for any kind of ill-usage from me, I think I will marry the man even against my inclination.

*Mrs. Fain.* You should not go in for adultery ?

*Mrs. Mar.* No, but I would make him believe that I did, and that will be as bad as that.

*Mrs. Fain.* Why do you not rather do it.

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, in that case, if he ever comes to know about my adultery, he would be out of his pain ; what I want is that the suspicion of having been made a cuckold should inflict on him the worst kind of torture.

*Mrs. Fain.* It's a wonderful mischievous plan indeed. Would you were married to Mirabell.

*Mrs. Mar.* Would I were.

*Mrs. Fain.* You are blushing.

*Mrs. Mar.* It is because I hate him.

*Mrs. Fain.* So do I ; but I can hear him named. But what reason do you have to hate him in particular ?

*Mrs. Mar.* I never loved him ; he is always insufferably proud.

*Mrs. Fain* The reason you give of your hatred towards him, one would think that you are not telling the truth ; because you have charged him with a fault of which even his enemies do not accuse him

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, then it seems that you are one of his favourite enemies. I think you look a little pale, and now you are reddened again.

*Mrs. Fain.* Do I ? I have a sudden attack of dizziness

*Mrs. Mar.* What is your sickness ?

*Mrs. Fain.* My husband. Don't you see him ; he has suddenly come before me and has made me sick.

*Enter Fainall and Mirabell*

*Mrs. Mar.* Ha, ha, ha, he has come just in time for you.

*Mrs. Fain.* It is for you ; you see he has brought Mirabell with him.

*Fain.* My dear.

*Mrs. Fain.* My soul.

*Fain.* You don't look well to-day, child.

*Mrs. Fain.* Do you think so ?

*Mira.* He is the only man that does, madam.

*Mrs. Fain.* The only one that would tell me so at least, and the

only man from whom I could hear it without mortification.

*Fain.* Oh, my dear, I am satisfied of your tenderness ; I know you cannot resent anything from me ; especially what is an effect of my concern.

*Mrs. Fain.* Mr. Mirabell, my mother interrupted you in a pleasant relation last night : I would fain hear it out.

*Mira.* The persons concerned in that affair have yet a tolerable reputation.—I am afraid Mr. Fainall will be censorious.

*Mrs. Fain.* He has a humour more prevailing than his curiosity, and will willingly dispense with the hearing of one scandalous story, to avoid giving an occasion to make another by being seen to walk with his wife. This way, Mr. Mirabell, and I dare promise you will oblige us both.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell.*

*Fain.* Excellent creature ! Well, sure if I should live to be rid of my wife, I should be a miserable man.

*Mrs. Mar.* Ay !

*Fain.* For having only that one hope, the accomplishment of it, of consequence, must put an end to all my hopes ; and what a wretch is he who must survive his hopes ! Nothing remains when that day comes, but to sit down and weep like Alexander, when he wanted other worlds to conquer.

*Mrs. Mar.* Will you not follow'em ?

*Fain.* Faith, I think not.

*Mrs. Mar.* Pray let us ; I have a reason.

*Fain.* You are not jealous ?

*Mrs. Mar,* Of whom ?

*Fain.* Of Mirabell.

*Mrs. Mar.* If I am, is it inconsistent with my love to you that I am tender of your honour ?

*Fain.* You would intimate then, as if there were a fellow-feeling between my wife and him.

*Mrs. Mar.* I think she does not hate him to that degree she would be thought.

*Fain.* But he, I fear, is too insensible.

*Mrs. Mar.* It may be you are deceived.

*Fain.* It may be so. I do now begin to apprehend

*Mrs. Mar.* What ?

*Fain.* That I have been deceived, madam, and you are false.

*Mrs. Mar.* That I am false ! What mean you ?

*Fain.* To let you know I see through all your little arts. Come, you both love him ; and both have equally dissembled

only man from whom I could hear it without pain.

*Fain.* Oh, my dear, I am so happy at your love and kindness. I know you cannot resent anything from me ; especially the remark I made on account of my concern for you.

*Mrs. Fain.* Mr. Mirabell, my mother interrupted when you were relating a pleasant story last night : I would love to hear it now.

*Mira.* The persons concerned in that affair have yet quite good reputation to defend.—I am afraid Mr. Fainall will become critical of me if I tell the story now.

*Mrs. Fain.* He is not much curious as to hear the story than satisfy his present turn of mood. He will quite willingly refrain from hearing one scandalous story, in order to avoid offering an occasion to make another by being seen to walk with his wife. This way, Mr. Mirabell, and I do request you to oblige us both by your story.

(*Exeunt Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell*

*Fain.* Excellent creature. Surely, if I live after getting rid of my wife, I will be a miserable man.

*Mrs. Mar.* Yes.

*Fain.* My one and only hope is to get rid of my wife ; when that hope is accomplished I would have nothing to live for ; and what a wretched man is he who lives even after the end of all hopes. Nothing is left when such a day comes except to sit down and weep like Alexander, when he wanted other worlds to conquer.

*Mrs. Mar.* Will you not follow them ?

*Fain.* In faith, I don't think, I will.

*Mrs. Mar.* Pray let us follow them ; I have some reason to do this.

*Fain.* You are not jealous, I suppose ?

*Mrs. Mar.* Of whom ?

*Fain.* Of Mirabell.

*Mrs. Mar.* If I am jealous will it be inconsistent with my love to you and my interest in guarding your honour ?

*Fain.* You want to tell me then, as if there were fellow-feeling between my wife and Mirabell.

*Mrs. Mar.* I think she does not hate him as much as we think she does.

*Fain.* But I think he is too indifferent to women.

*Mrs. Mira.* It may be you are deceived.

*Fain.* It may be so. I do not now understand the thing.

*Mrs. Mar.* What ?

*Fain.* That I have been deceived, madam, and you are false.

*Mrs. Mar.* That I am false ? what do you mean ?

*Fain.* I just want to let you know that I can see through all your little scheming. Come, you must admit that you both love him ; and both of you have dissembled.

your aversion. Your mutual jealousies of one another have made you clash till you have both struck fire. I have seen the warm confession reddening on your cheeks, and sparkling from your eyes.

*Mrs. Mar.* You do me wrong.

*Fain.* I do not.—'Twas for my ease to oversee and wilfully neglect the gross advances made him by my wife; that by permitting her to be engaged, I might continue unsuspected in my pleasures; and take you oftener to my arms in full security. But could you think, because the nodding husband would not wake, that e'er the watchful lover slept?

*Mrs. Mar.* And wherewithal can you reproach me?

*Fain.* With infidelity, with loving another, with love of Mirabell.

*Mrs. Mar.* 'Tis false. I challenge you to show an instance that can confirm your groundless accusation. I hate him.

*Fain.* And wherefore do you hate him? He is insensible, and your resentment follows his neglect. An instance! The injuries you have done him are a proof: your interposing in his love. What cause had you to make discoveries of his pretended passion? To undeceive the credulous aunt, and be the officious obstacle of his match with Millamant?

*Mrs. Mar.* My obligations to my lady urged me; I had professed a friendship to her; and could not see her easy nature so abused by that dissembler.

*Fain.* What, was it conscience then? Professed a friendship! O the pious friendships of the female sex!

*Mrs. Mar.* More tender more sincere, and more enduring, than all the vain and empty vows of men, whether professing love to us or mutual faith to one another.

*Fain.* He, ha, ha! you are my wife's friend too.

*Mrs. Mar.* Shame and ingratitude! Do you reproach me? You, you upbraid me! Have I been false to her, through strict fidelity to you, and sacrificed my friendship to keep my love inviolate? And have you the baseness to charge me with the guilt, unmindful of the merit! To you it should be meritorious, that I have been vicious: and do you reflect that guilt upon me, which should lie buried in your bosom?

*Fain.* You misinterpret my reproof. I meant but to remind you of the slight account you once could make of strictest ties, when set in competition with your love to me.

*Mrs. Mar.* 'Tis false, you urged it with deliberate malice. 'Twas spoke in scorn, and I never will forgive it.

your hatred for the man equally well. I have noticed the warmth of your love expressed in your eyes.

*Mrs. Mar.* You are doing me wrong.

*Fain.* I am not....it was for my own benefit that I overlooked and wilfully remained indifferent to the love-making of my wife, to be able to take you as often as possible in my arms without any suspicion from any quarter.

*Mrs. Mar.* But on what account do you reproach me?

*Fain.* I charge you with infidelity, with loving another, with love of Mirabell.

*Mrs. Mar.* It is false. I challenge you to show an instance.

*Fain.* And why do you hate him? He is indifferent and your anger is caused by this neglect from him. An instance? The injuries you have done him are a proof; your interfering in his love-affair. What cause did you have in disclosing his pretentious love (for Lady Wishfort)? To disclose everything to the aunt, who believed in the affair and thus became an officious obstacle in his match with Millamant?

*Mrs. Mar.* My obligation to my lady prompted me to disclose the thing. I had professed a friendship to her; I could not bear that so kind a nature like her to be abused by that dissembler.

*Fain.* Do you want me to believe then that it was your conscience that did the thing? that you did it because you professed a friendship? Oh, the pious friendship of the female sex!

*Mrs. Mar.* We are more tender, more sincere, and more enduring than all the vain and empty vows of men, either when professing love to us, or mutual faith to one another.

*Fain.* Ha, ha, ha! you are indeed my wife's friend.

*Mrs. Mar.* Shame and ingratitude! Do you reproach me? You, you censure me! Is it not that I have been false to her in order to retain my strong fidelity to you? Have I not sacrificed my friendship in order to retain my love for you? And have you the baseness to charge me with the guilt of infidelity to you. Are you the least concerned about all the good I have done to you? You should consider it a good quality in me that I have been vicious in loving another's husband. In fact you should appreciate this. Instead you put the blame on me, of which yourself are guilty of. Rather you should try to conceal that guilt in your heart.

*Fain.* You misunderstand the cause of my resentment. I meant to remind you only what little attention you care to pay to me, compared to the love you profess for me.

*Mrs. Mar.* It is false—you talked like that with deliberate bad intention—you said with scorn and I will never forgive it.

*Fain.* Your guilt, not your resentment, begets your age. If yet you loved, you could forgive a jealousy: but you are stung to find you are discovered.

*Mrs. Mar.* It shall be all discovered. You too shall be discovered; be sure you shall. I can but be exposed—if I do it myself I shall prevent your baseness.

*Fain.* Why, what will you do?

*Mrs. Mar.* Disclose it to your wife; own what has passed between us.

*Fain.* Frenzy!

*Mrs. Mar.* By all my wrongs I'll do't—I'll publish to the world the injuries you have done me, both in my fame and fortune. With both I trusted you, you bankrupt in honour, as indigent of wealth.

*Fain.* Your fame I have preserved. Your fortune has been bestowed as the prodigality of your love would have it, pleasures which we both have shared. Yet had not you been false, I had ere this repaid it.—'Tis true, had you permitted Mirabell with Millamant to have stolen their marriage, my lady had been incensed beyond all means of reconcilement: Millamant had forfeited the moiety of her fortune; which then would have descended to my wife;—and wherefore did I marry, but to make lawful prize of a rich widow's wealth, and squander it on love and you?

*Mrs. Mar* Deceit and frivolous pretence.

*Fain.* Death, am I not married? What's pretence? Am I not imprisoned, fettered? Have I not a wife? Nay, a wife that was a widow, a young widow, a handsome widow; and would be again a widow, but that I have a heart of proof, and something of a constitution to bustle through the ways of wedlock and this world. Will you yet be reconciled to truth and me?

*Mrs. Mar.* Impossible. Truth and you are inconsistent—I hate you, and shall for ever.

*Fain.* For loving you?

*Mrs. Mar.* I loathe the name of love after such usage; and next to the guilt with which you would asperse me, I scorn you most. Farewell.

*Fain.* Nay, we must not part thus.

*Mrs. Mar.* Let me go.

*Fain.* Come, I'm sorry.

*Mrs. Mar.* I care not—let me go—break my hands, do—I'd leave 'em to get loose.

*Fain.* I would not hurt you for the world. Have I no other hold to keep you here?

*Fain.* Your guilt and not your resentment is the real cause of your anger. If you still loved me, you could forgive a jealousy but you are stung to find that you have been exposed.

*Mrs. Mar.* It shall all be exposed. I can be exposed, no doubt—but if I do myself I help you in your not showing your baseness by doing so.

*Fain.* Why, what will you do?

*Mrs. Mar.* Expose everything to your wife.

*Fain.* It's nothing but insanity.

*Mrs. Mar.* By all my wrongs I will do it—I will make public to the world the injuries you have inflicted on me, both on my fame and fortune. I trusted you with both: you are as devoid of honour as you are poor.

*Fain.* I have preserved your fame. Your money has been spent in the extravagance of your love, in the pursuit of pleasures shared by both of us. Yet if you had not been false, I would have repaid your money. It is true that had you permitted Mirabell and Millamant to have their marriage in secret, my Lady would have been enraged beyond all means of reconcilement: in that case Millamant would have lost half of her fortuue; which then would have been inherited by my wife. And why do you think I married? I married to enjoy the lawful property of a rich widow, and spend the fortune lavishly on love and you.

*Mrs. Mar.* These are nothing but your deceptions and pretence which of course would go futile.

*Fain.* Death, (an oath) am I not married? Is it pretence? Am I not imprisoned and chained to a wife? Not only that, chained to a wife who was widow, a young widow, a handsome widow. I have good health, and my mind is not tortured by jealousy on account of my wife's inconstancy. As I am not disturbed by any of these I can live strong through all the caprices of a married life and through the ways of the world. Will you now be satisfied.

*Mrs. Mar.* Impossible. Truth and you are inconsistent—I hate you and I shall do that for ever.

*Fain.* For loving you?

*Mrs. Mar.* I hate the mention of love after being treated by you like this: and not to the guilt with which you slander me, let me tell you that I scorn you most. Farewell.

*Fain.* No, you must not part like this.

*Mrs. Mar.* Let me go.

*Fain.* Come, I am sorry

*Mrs. Mar.* I don't care—let me go—break my hands, do—I would rather leave to get loose.

*Fain.* I would not hurt you for the world. Have I no other hold on you to keep you here?

*Mrs. Mar.* Well, I have deserved it all.

*Fain.* You know I love you.

*Mrs. Mar.* Poor dissembling !—Oh, that—Well, it is not yet—

*Fain.* What ? What is it not ? What is it not yet ? It is not yet too late—

*Mrs. Mar.* No, it is not yet too late—I have that comfort.

*Fain.* It is, to love another.

*Mrs. Mar.* But not to loathe, detest, abhor mankind, myself and the whole treacherous world.

*Fain.* Nay, this is extravagance. Come, I ask your pardon —no tears—I was to blame, I could not love you and be easy in my doubt.—Pray forbear—I believe you ; I'm convinced I've done you wrong ; and any way, every way will make amends ;—I'll hate my wife yet more, damn her I'll part with her, rob her of all she's worth, and we'll retire somewhere, anywhere, to another world. I'll marry thee.—Be pacified—'Sdeath, they come, hide your face, your tears—you have a mask, wear it a moment. This way, this way, be persuaded. [*Exeunt.*

*Re-enter Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall*

*Mrs. Fain.* They are here yet.

*Mira.* They are turning into the other walk.

*Mrs. Fain.* While I only hated my husband, I could bear to see him ; but since I have despised him, he's too offensive.

*Mira.* Oh, you should hate with prudence.

*Mrs. Fain.* Yes, for I have loved with indiscretion.

*Mira.* You should have just so much disgust for your husband as may be sufficient to make you relish your lover.

*Mrs. Fain.* You have been the cause that I have loved without bounds, and would you set limits to that aversion, of which you have been the occasion ? Why did you make me marry this man ?

*Mira.* Why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions ? To save that idol reputation. If the familiarities of our loves had produced that consequence, of which you were apprehensive, where could you have fixed a father's name with credit, but on a husband ? I knew Fainall to be a man lavish of his morals, an interested and professing friend, a false and a designing lover ; yet one whose wit and outward fair behaviour have gained a reputation with the town, enough to make that woman stand excused, who has suffered herself to be won by his addresses. A better man ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion ; a worse had not answered to the purpose. When you are weary of him, you know your remedy,

*Mrs. Mar.* Well, I have deserved it all.

*Fain.* You know I love you.

*Mrs. Mar.* Poor dissembling !—Oh, that—Well, it is not yet.

*Fain.* What ? What is it not ? It is not yet too late.

*Mrs. Mar.* No it is not yet too late—I have that comfort.

*Fain.* It is to love another.

*Mrs. Mar.* But not to hate, detest, abhor mankind.

*Fain.* No, this is going too far. Come, I ask your pardon—no tears, I was to blame, I could not love you and be easy in my minds about doubts—pray be patients—I believe you ; I am convinced I have done you wrong and I will make amends in any way and every way :—I will hate my wife yet more, damn her, I will part with her, rob her of all she is worth, . and will go away somewhere in the world with you ; I will marry—be pacified now—'Sdeath, they are coming this way. Please hide your face and your tears—you have a mask, please wear it for a moment. Come this way, this way, please listen to me. (*Exeunt.*

*Re-enter Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall*

*Mrs. Fain.* They are here still now.

*Mira.* They are turning into the other walk.

*Mrs. Fain.* When I hated my husband, I could at least bear to see him ; but since I have started despising him, he has become just undearable to me.

*Mira.* Oh, you should hate prudently.

*Mrs. Fain.* Yes, because I have been unwise in love.

*Mira.* You should have only that much disgust as may make you enjoy the affair with your lover.

*Mrs. Fain.* You have been the cause that I have loved without measure. Now you are going to impose limits to my hate. Why did you make me marry this man ?

*Mira.* Why do we commit undesirable and dangerous actions every day of our life ? It is to save the reputation we idolise. If the intimacies of our love-making had produced that result of which you were so much afraid, where could you give it (your illegitimate child) the due reputation by finding father and his name except by getting a husband. I knew Fainall to be a man of reckless morality, an interested and seemingly friendship, a false and scheming lover. However, his wit and outward good behaviour have gained for him that reputation which would be enough to save a woman from blame if she were unable to resist his charm and wit. I would not foist a pregnant woman upon a better man, but I did not feel any scruple as regards Fainall. On the other hand a man with no reputation would not serve the purpose. When you are tired of him, you know your way out.

*Mrs. Fain* I ought to stand in some degree of credit with you, Mirabell.

*Mira.* In justice to you, I have made you privy to my whole design, and put it in your power to ruin or advance my fortune.

*Mrs. Fain.* Whom have you instructed to represent your pretended uncle ?

*Mira.* Waitwell, my servant.

*Mrs. Fain.* He is an humble servant to Foible, my mother's woman, and may win her to your interest.

*Mira.* Care is taken for that—she is won and worn by this time. They were married this morning.

*Mrs. Fain.* Who ?

*Mira.* Waitwell and Foible. I would not tempt my servant to betray me by trusting him too far. If your mother, in hopes to ruin me, should consent to marry my pretended uncles he might, like Mosca in the *Fox*, stand upon terms ; so I made him sure beforehand.

*Mrs. Fain* So, if my poor mother is caught in a contract, you will discover the imposture betimes : and release her by producing a certificate of her gallant's former marriage.

*Mira.* Yes, upon condition that she consent to my marriage with her niece, and surrender the moiety, of her fortune in her possession.

*Mrs. Fain.* She talked last night of endeavouring at a match between Millamant and your uncle.

*Mira.* That was by Foible's direction, and my instruction, that she might seem to carry it more privately.

*Mrs. Fain* Well, I have an opinion of your success ; for I believe my lady will do anything to get an husband ; and when she has this, which you have provided for her, I suppose she will submit to anything to get rid of him.

*Mira.* Yes, I think the good lady would marry anything that resembled a man, though 'twere no more than what a butler could pinch out of a napkin.

*Mrs. Fain.* Female frailty ! We must all come to it, if we live to be old, and feel the craving of a false appetite when the true is decayed.

*Mira.* An old woman's appetite is depraved like that of a girl —'tis the green-sickness of a second childhood ; and like the faint offer of a later spring, serves but to usher in the fall ; and withers in an affected bloom.

*Mrs. Fain.* Here's your mistress.

*Enter Mrs. Millamant, Witwoud, and Mincing*

*Mira.* Here she comes i' faith full sail, with her fan spread

*Mrs. Fain.* I hope I deserve a little bit of your confidence, Mirabell.

*Mira.* I have confided to you the whole of my plan, and placed my fate in your power. Yon may either ruin my fortune or advance it, as you please.

*Mrs. Fain.* Whom have you asked to be your pretended uncle ?

*Mira.* Waitwell, my servant.

*Mrs. Fain.* He is an obedient lover of Foible, my mother's servant, and he may win her to your interest.

*Mira.* I have taken care of that too—she ha already been won. They were married this morning.

*Mrs. Fain.* Who are married ?

*Mira.* Waitwell and Foible. I would not tempt my servant to betray me by trusting him too much. If your mother in order to ruin me should agree to marry my pretended uncle, he might, like Mosca in the *Fox*, double-cross his master ; so I made sure beforehand.

*Mrs. Fain.* So that if my mother is trapped into [a marriage, you will disclose the imposter in time by producing a certificate of her gallant's former marriage. .

*Mira.* Yes, on condition that she agrees to my marriage with her niece, and surrender the half of her fortune in her possession.

*Mrs. Fain.* She was talking last night of trying to arrange a marriage between Millamant and your uncle.

*Mira.* It was by my instruction to Foible, and on Foible's suggestion to Lady Wishfort that it was given out that Millamant would be engaged to Mirabell's uncle while Waitwell would make love to Lady Wishfort.

*Mrs. Fain.* Well, I have a feeling that you would be successful, because, I believe that my lady will do anything to get a husband ; and when she has this lover I think she will submit to anything to get rid of him.

*Mira.* Yes, I think the good lady would marry anything that goes by the name of man though the person is no more than a mere butler.

*Mrs. Fain.* That is what is known as female frailty ! We must all come to it, if we live to be old and feel a morbid carnal desire at a time when the senses and organs are in a state of decay.

*Mira.* An old woman's desire is perverted sometimes like that of a girl—it is the green sickness of a second childhood ; and like the faint offer of a latter spring, serves but to bring in autumnal decay and withers away after a forced bloom.

*Mrs. Fain* Here is your mistress.

*Enter Mrs. Millamant, Witwoud*; and *Mincing*

*Mira.* In faith, here she comes in full bloom of her beauty and grace, with her fan spread.

and streamers out, and a shoal of fools for tenders—ha, no, I cry her mercy.

*Mrs. Fain.* I see but one poor empty sculler; and he tows her woman after him.

*Mira.* You seem to be unattended, madam. You used to have the *beau monde* throng after you; and a flock of gay fine perukes hovering round you.

*Wit.* Like moths about a candle—I had like to have lost my comparison for want of breath.

*Milla.* Oh, I have denied myself airs to-day. I have walked as fast through the crowd.

*Wit.* As a favourite just disgraced; and with as few followers.

*Milla.* Dear Mr. Witwoud, truce with your similitudes: for I am as sick of 'em.

*Wit.* As a physician of a good air—I cannot help it, madam though 'tis against myself.

*Milla.* Yet again! Mincing, stand between me and his wit.

*Wit.* Do, Mrs. Mincing, like a screen before a great fire. I confess I do blaze to-day, I am too bright.

*Mrs. Fain.* But, dear Millamant, why were you so long?

*Milla.* Long! Lord, have I not made violent haste? I have asked every living thing I met for you: I have enquired after you, as after a new fashion.

Madam, truce with your similitudes—No, you met her husband, and did not ask him for her.

*Mira.* By your leave, Witwoud, that were like enquiring after an old fashion, to ask a husband for his wife.

*Wit.* Hum, a hit, a hit, a palpable hit, I confess it.

*Mrs. Fain.* You were dressed before I came abroad.

*Milla.* Ay, that's true—Oh, but then I had—Mincing, what had I? Why was I so long?

*Minc.* Oh, mem, your la'ship stayed to peruse a packet of letters.

*Milla.* Oh, ay, letters—I had letters—I am persecuted with letters—I hate letters—no body knows how to write letters; and yet one has'em, one does not know why—they serve one to pin up one's hair.

*Wit.* Is that the way? Pray, madam, do you pin up your hair with all your letters? I find I must keep copies

*Milla.* Only with those in verse, Mr. Witwoud. I never pin up my hair with prose, I'll think I tried once, Mincing.

*Minc.* Oh, mem, I shall never forget it.

*Milla.* Ay, poor Mincing tift and tift all the morning.

*Minc.* 'Till I had the cramp in my fingers, I vow, mem. And

and ribbons out, Witwoud and Mincing attending on her. Ha, no, I thank her, she is not attended by many except by Witwoud.

*Mrs. Fain.* I see but only one fool attending her, and he (Mirabell) is gradually drawing her woman after him.

*Mira.* You seem to be unattended, madam. You used to have the fashionable crowd of fops following you, and a flock of gay men in fine wigs hovering round you.

*Wit.* Like moths about a candle—I seem to have lost the power of making comparison for want of breath.

*Milla.* Oh, I am in simple form to-day unattended by any grandeur. I have walked very fast through the crowd—

*Wit.* Because nobody paid any attention to her.

*Milla.* Dear Mr Witwoud, no more 'of your comparisons.

*Wit.* As a physician is sick of good air—I cannot help it.

*Milla.* Are you doing it again! Mincing, stand between me and his wit.

*Wit.* Do, Mrs. Mincing, like a screen before a great fire I confess that I am on fire to-day, I am too bright.

*Mrs. Fain.* But, dear Millamant, why were you so long?

*Milla.* Long? Lord, have I not made violent haste? I have enquired after you, as people do after a new fashion.

*Wit.* Madam, please no more of your comparisons—no, you met her husband, and did not ask him for her.

*Mira.* By your leave, Witwoud, that would have been like enquiring after an old fashion, to ask a husband for his wife.

*Wit.* Hum, a hit, a hit its a smart stroke, I must admit.

*Mrs. Fain.* You were dressed before I came out.

*Milla.* Yes that is true—Oh, but then I had—Mincing, what had I? Why was I so long?

*Minc.* Your ladyship stopped to read a packet of letters.

*Milla.* Oh, yes, letters—I had letters—I am persecuted with letters—I hate letters—no body knows how to write letters; yet one has them, one does not know why—perhaps they serve one to pin up one's hair.

*Wit.* Is that the fashion? Pray, madam, do you pin up your hair with all your letters? I find I must keep copies of the letters I send.

*Milla.* You must keep copies of only those you write in verse Mr. Witwoud. I never pin up my hair with those written in prose. I think, I tried once to do so, Mincing.

*Minc.* Oh men, I shall never forget it.

*Milla.* Yes, Mincing; I tried to arrange my hair with letters in prose all the morning and I could not.

*Minc.* 'Till I had the cramp in my fingers in doing so.

all to no purpose. But when your la'ship pins it up with poetry, it sits so pleasant the next day as anything and is so pure and so crips.

*Wit.* Indeed, so crips ?

*Minc.* You're such a critic, Mr. Witwoud.

*Milla.* Mirabell, did you take exceptions last night ? Oh, ay, and went away.—Now I think on't I'm angry.—No, now I think on't I'm pleased—for I believe I gave you some pain.

*Mira.* Does that please you ?

*Milla.* Infinitely : I love to give pain.

*Mira.* You would affect a cruelty which is not in your nature your true vanity is in the power of pleasing.

*Milla.* Oh, I ask your pardon for that—one's cruelty is one's power, and when one parts with one's cruelty, one parts with one's power ; and when one has parted with that, I fancy one's old and ugly.

*Mira.* Ay, ay, suffer your cruelty to ruin the object of your power, to destroy your lover—and then how vain, how lost a thing you'll be ! Nay, 'tis true : you are no longer handsome when you've lost your lover : your beauty dies upon the instant ; for beauty is the lover's gift ; 'tis he bestows your charms. Your glass is all a cheat. The ugly and the old, whom the looking-glass mortifies, yet after commendation can be flattered by it, and discover beauties in it : for that reflects our praises, rather than your face.

*Milla.* Oh, the vanity of these men ! Fainall, d' ye hear him ? If they did not commend us, we were not handsome ! Now you must know they could not commend one, if one was not handsome. Beauty is the lover's gift—Lord, what is a lover, that it can give ? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases ; and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases: and then if one pleases one makes more.

*Wit.* Very pretty. Why, you make no more of making of lovers, madam, than of making so many cardmatches.

*Milla.* One no more owes one's beauty to a lover, than one's wit to an echo ; they can but reflect what we looked and say ; vain empty things if we are silent or unseen, and want a being.

*Mira.* Yet, to those two vain empty things, you owe the two greatest pleasures of your life.

*Milla.* How so ?

*Mira.* To your lover you owe the pleasure of hearing yourselves praised ; and to an echo the pleasure of hearing yourselves talk.

all to no purpose. But when your ladyship pins it up with poetry, it sets so pleasant the next day as anything, and is so pure and so crip (meaning crisp).

*Wit.* Indeed, so crisps ?

*Minc,* You are such a critic, Mr Witwoud.

*Milla.* Mirabell, did you take offence last night ? Oh, yes, you did, and went away—now that I think of it, I am pleased—because I believe I gave you some pain.

*Mira.* Does that please you ?

*Milla.* Infinitely ; I love to give pain.

*Mira.* You would assume a cruelty which is not natural in you. Your true nature is in the power of pleasing others.

*Milla.* Oh, I ask your pardon for that—one's cruelty is one's power ; and when one has parted with that, I fancy, one becomes old and ugly.

*Mira.* Yes, yes, it also means that you should encourage your cruelty to ruin object of your power, to destroy your lover—and then how vain how lost a thing you will be ! Well, it is ture. You are no longer handsome when you have lost your lover ; your beauty dies upon the instant ; for beauty is bestowed upon one by the lover ; it is he who bestows you your charms. Your looking glass is all deception. The ugly and the old, whom the looking glass mortifies, may still be flattered by it after being praised, and discover beauties in the face : the glass reflects the praises of the lover, rather than your face.

*Milla.* Oh, the vanity of these men ! Fainall, do you hear him ? If they did not praise us, we would not be handsome ! Now, you know very well that they could not prase one if one was not handsome. Beauty, the lover's gift—Lord, what is a lover, that it can boast of giving anything ? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases : and then if one pleases one can even multiply the number of lovers.

*Wit.* Very good indeed ! Why, you make no more of making of lovers, madam, like matching of so many cards like the king and the queen, in a game of cards.

*Milla.* One no more owes one's beauty to a lover, than one owes wits borrowed from others : they (lover and wit) are produced by our beautiful looks and words. We are nothing but vain and empty things if we are silent or unseen, and are non-existent.

*Mira.* Yet to these two vain empty things you owe two of the greatest pleasures of your life

*Milla.* How is that ?

*Mira.* To your lover you owe the pleasure of yourself being praised ; and to an echo you owe the pleasure of hearing yourself talk.

*Wit.* But I know a lady that loves talking so incessantly, she won't give an echo fair play; she has that everlasting rotation of tongue, that an echo must wait 'till she dies, before it can catch her last words.

*Milla.* Oh, fiction; Fainall, let us leave these men.

*Mira.* Draw off Witwoud. [*Aside to Mrs. Fainall*]

*Mrs. Fain.* Immediately; I have a word or two for Mr. Witwoud.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Fainall and Witwoud*

*Mira.* I would beg a little private audience too—you had the tyranny to deny me last night; though you knew I came to impart a secret to you that concerned my love.

*Milla.* You say I was engaged.

*Mira.* Unkind. You had the leisure to entertain a herd of fools; things who visit you from their excessive idleness; bestowing on your easiness that time, which is the encumbrance of their lives. How can you find delight in such society? It is impossible they should admire you, they are not capable: or if they were, it should be you as a mortification; for sure to please a fool is some degree of folly.

*Milla.* I please myself.—Besides, sometimes to converse with fools is for my health.

*Mira.* Your health! Is there a worse disease than the conversation of fools?

*Milla.* Yes, the vapours; fools are physic for it, next to *assafoetida*.

*Mira.* You are not in a course of fools?

*Milla.* Mirabell, if you persist in this offensive freedom, you'll displease me. I think I must resolve, after all, not to have you—we shan't agree.

*Mira.* Not in our physic it may be.

*Milla.* And yet our distemper in all likelihood will be the same: for we shall be sick of one another. I shan't endure to be reprimanded, nor instructed; 'tis so dull to act always by advice, and so tedious to be told of one's faults—I can't bear it. Well, I won't have you, Mirabell. I'm resolved—I think you may go. Ha, ha, ha, ! What would you give, that you could help loving me.

*Mira.* I would give something that you did not know I could not help it.

*Milla.* Come, don't look grave then. Well, what do you say to me.

*Mira.* I say that a man may as soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman with plain-dealing and sincerity.

*Milla.* Sententious Mirabell ! prithee don't look with that

*Wit.* But I know a lady that loves talking in such a way without stop that the echo produced by her words cannot be heard ; she talks so constantly without stopping that one feels that the echo must wait till she dies, before it can cath her last words.

*Milla.* Oh, it cannot be true ; Fainall, let us leave these men.

*Mira.* Take Witwoud away, please. [*Aside to Mrs. Fainall*

*Mrs. Fain.* Yes, let's do it immediately ; but I have a word or two for Mr. Witwoud.

[*Exeunt Mrs. Fainall and Witwoud.*

*Mira.* I would beg a little private audience too that you were tyranneous enough to deny me last night ; I am sure you knew that I went to tell you about a secret.

*Milla.* You saw I was engaged.

*Mira.* Unkind. You had the time to entertain a herd of fools. By doing so they take advantage of your easiness to spend thir idleness which is otherwise, the encumbrance of their lives. How can you find delight in such society ? It is not possible that they can even admire your beauty as they are not even capable of that. Even if they do admire it would be to your mortification ; surely it is a kind of folly indeed to entertain a fool.

*Milla.* I please myself by entertaining the fools, you know—besides, talking with fools does good to my health.

*Miru.* Your health ! Is there a worse disease than the conversation of fools ?

*Milla.* Yes, the depression ; fools act as medicine for that, next to assafoetida (an antispasmodic).

*Mira.* You are not undergoing a course of fools, I suppose ?

*Milla.* Mirabell, if you go on like this you will displease me—I think I must decide, after all, not to have you—we shall not agree with each other.

*Mira.* We may agree in the kind of medicine we take.

*Milla.* In any case our disease in all likelihood will be the same, because we shall be sick of one another. I cannot stand being scolded, nor given instruction ; it is so dull to act always on advice and so tedious to be told of one's faults—I cannot bear it. Well, I won't have you. Mirabell, you may go. Ha, ha, ha, what would you give to help loving me ?

*Mira.* There is not doubt that I cannot help loving you ; it would be better if you did not know about it.

*Milla.* Come, don't look so serious then. Well, what do you want to tell me ?

*Mira.* I want to tell you that a man may soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman with plain-dealing and sincerity.

*Milla.* Oh, don't be so formal, Mirabell !

violent and inflexible wise face, like Solomon at the dividing of the child in an old tapestry hanging.

*Mira.* You are merry madam, but I would persuade you for a moment to be serious.

*Milla.* What, with that face? No, if you keep your countenance, 'tis impossible I should hold mine. Well, after all, there is something very moving in a lovesick face. Ha, ha. ha! Well, I won't laugh, don't be peevish. Heigho! Now I'll be melancholy, as melancholy as a watch-light. Well, Mirabell, if ever you will win me, woo me now. Nay, if you are so tedious, fare you well. I see they are walking away.

*Mira.* Can you not find in the variety of your disposition one moment—

*Milla.* To hear you tell me Foible's married, and your plot like to speed? No.

*Mira.* But how you came to know it—

*Milla.* Without the help of the devil, you can't imagine; unless she would tell me herself. Which of the two it may have been, I will leave you to consider; and when you have done thinking of that, think, of me.

[*Exeunt Millamant and Mincing*]

*Mira.* I have something more. Gone! —Think of you! To think of a whirlwind, though 'twere in a whirlwind, were a case of more steady contemplation; a very tranquillity of mind and mansion. A fellow that lives in windmill has not a more whimsical dwelling than the heart of a man that is lodged in a woman. There is no point of the compass to which they cannot turn, and by which they are not turned; and by one as well as another; for motion not method is their occupation. To know this, and yet continue to be in love, is to be made wise from the dictates of reason, and yet persevere to play the fool by the force of instinct.--Oh, here come my pair of turtles,—what, billing so sweetly! Is not Valentine's Day over with you yet?

*Enter Waitwell and Foible*

*Mira.* Sirrah, Waitwell, why, sure you think you were married for your own recreation, and not for my conveniency.

*Wait.* Your pardon, sir. With submission, we have indeed been solacing in lawful delights; but still with an eye to business, sir. I have instructed her as well as I could. If she can take your directions as readily as my instructions, sir, your affairs are in a prosperous way.

*Mira.* Give you joy, Mrs. Foible.

*Foib.* Alas, sir, I'm so ashamed. I'm afraid my lady has been in a thousand inquietudes for me. But I protest, sir,! I made as much haste as I could.

like Solomon at the dividing of the child.

*Mira.* Madam, I will request you to be serious for a moment.

*Milla.* What with that face ? No, if you keep that kind of face, it is impossible that I could keep my countenance. After all there is something very moving in a love sick face. Ha, ha, ha, ! Well, I would not laugh ; don't be irritated. High ! now I will' become melancholy, as melancholy as a watch—light. Well, Mirabell, if you ever want to win me, woo me now. Well, if you are so boring, I wish you fare-well. I see they are walking away

*Mira.* Can you not find one moment ?

*Milla.* To hear you tell me that Foible is married. No.

*Mira.* But how did you come to know about that.

*Milla.* You cannot but think that I could not know except without the help of the devil, unless she should tell me herself.

*Mira* I have something more. Gone. Think of you ! I should rather think of a whirlwind though to think of a whirlwind is rather much easier a contemplation than to think of my lover. I don't think that a man who lives in a windmill has more whimsical a dwelling place than the heart of a man lodged in the love of a woman. A lover too has little free will of his own, he is always under the whims and caprices of the woman that he loves. I know this, and still I continue to be in love. Although made wise by reason I am made a fool by the force of instinct which makes me love.—Oh, here come my pair of turtles,—what, they are still so engaged in love-making ! Is not Valentine's Day (the day of mating) over with you as yet ?

*Enter Waitwell and Foible*

*Mira.* Sirrah, Waitwell, why, surely you were married for your recreation, and not for serving any purpose of mine..

*Wait.* I beg your pardon, sir. With your permission, we have indeed been passing some time in lawful delights (as we are married) ; but we have all the time an eye to business, sir. I have told her what she should do and given her as best instruction as possible. But, if she can get your directions as readily as my instructions, sir, your business will be done in a very successful way, no doubt.

*Mira.* I wish you joy, Mrs. Foible.

*Foib.* Alas, sir, I feel so shy. I am afraid my lady must have been in a thousand anxieties for me. But I assure you, sir, I made as much haste as I could.

*Wait.* That she did indeed, sir. It was my fault that she did not make more.

*Mira.* That I believe.

*Foib.* But I told my lady as you instructed me, sir, that I had a prospect of seeing Sir Rowland your uncle; and that I would put her ladyship's picture in my pocket to show him; which I'll be sure to say has made him so enamoured of her beauty, that he burns with impatience to lie at her ladyship's feet and worship the original.

*Mira.* Excellent Foible! Matrimony has made you eloquent in love.

*Wait.* I think she has profited, sir. I think so.

*Foib.* You have seen Madam Millamant, sir?

*Mira.* Yes.

*Foib.* I told her, sir, because I did not know that you might find an opportunity; she had so much company last night.

*Mira.* Your diligence will merit more. In the meantime— [*Gives Money*]

*Foib.* O dear sir, your humble servant.

*Wait.* Spouse.

*Mira.* Stand off, sir, not a penny. Go on and prosper, Foible—the lease shall be made good and the farm stocked, if we succeed.

*Foib.* I don't question your generosity, sir: and you need not doubt of success. If you have no more commands, sir, I'll be gone; I'm sure my lady is at her toilet, and can't dress till I come....O, dear, I'm sure that [*Looking out*] was Mrs. Marwood that went by in a mask; if she has seen me with you I'm sure she'll tell my lady. I'll make haste home and prevent her. Your servant, sir. Bye, Waitwell. [*Exit*

*Wait.* Sir Rowland if you please. The jade's so pert upon her preferment she forgets herself.

*Mira.* Come, sir, will you endeavour to forget yourself—and transform into Sir Rowland?

*Wait.* Why, sir; it will be impossible I should remember myself—married, knighted and attended all in one day! 'Tis enough to make any man forget himself. The difficulty will be how to recover my acquaintance and familiarity with my former self: and fall from my transformation to a reformation into Waitwell. Nay, I shan't be quite the same Waitwell neither—for now I remember me, I'm married, and can't be my own man again.

Ay there's my grief; that's the sad change of life;
To lose my title, and yet keep my wife.

[*Exeunt*]

*Wait.* That she did. It was my fault that she did no more.

*Mira.* I believe that.

*Foib.* But I told my lady as you directed me, sir, that I had the possibility of seeing Sir Rowland, your uncle ; and that I would put her ladyship's picture in my pocket to show him : which I will surely say that has made him so enamoured of her beauty, that he burns with impatience to lie to her ladyship's feet and worship the original.

*Mira.* It's excellent, Foible ! Matrimony has made you eloquent in love.

*Wait.* I think she has much by it, sir. I think so.

*Foib.* Have your seen Madam Millamant, Sir.

*Mira* Yes.

*Foib.* I told her, sir, because I did not know that you would find an opportunity she had so much company last night (so many people around her).

*Mira.* Your diligence deserves more. In the meantime—

[*Gives money.*

*Foib.* Oh, dear sir, your humble servant.

*Wait.* Now something for the husband, sir.

*Mira.* Stand off, sir, not a penny. Go on, and be happy, Foible—I shall reward you handsomely.

*Foib.* I don't have any doubt about your generosity, sir ; and you need not worry about your success. If you have no more instructions to give, sir, I will rather be gone. I am sure my lady is in her toilet and can't dress till I come. Oh, dear, I am sure that (looking out) was Mrs. Marwood that passed us in a mask ; if she has seen me with you I am sure she will tell my lady. I will hurry home and prevent her from telling anything to my lady. Your servant, sir. Bye, Waitwell. [*Exit*

*Wait.* Sir Rowland, if you please. The woman has become so saucy after being promoted to her present position (that is, after being married) that she forgets herself.

*Mira.* Come, sir, would you please try to forget yourself—and change yourself into Sir Rowland.

*Mait* Why, sir, it will be impossible that I should remember myself—married, knighted, and attended, all in a day ! It is enough to make any man to forget himself. The difficulty will be how to get back my acquaintance and familiarity with my former self ; and go back my transformation of Sir Rowland to my self, Waitwell. Well, I won't be the same Waitwell, either, for I remember myself now. I am married, and can't be my own again.

Aye, there's my grief ; that's the sad change of life.
To lose my title, and yet keep my wife.

[*Exeunt.*

## ACT THREE

*A room in Lady Wishfort's house*

*Lady Wishfort at her toilet, Peg waiting*

*Lady.* Merciful, no news of Foible yet?

*Peg.* No, madam.

*Lady.* I have no more patience.—If I have not fretted myself till I am pale again, there's no veracity in me. Fetch me the red—the red, do you hear, sweet-heart? An arrant ash colour, as I'm a person. Look you how this wench stirs! Why dost thou not fetch me a little red? Didst thou not hear me, mopus?

*Peg.* The red ratafia does your ladyship mean, or the cherry-brandy?

*Lady.* Ratafia, fool. No, fool. Not the ratafia, fool. Grant me patience! I mean the Spanish paper, idiot, complexion, darling. Paint, paint, paint! dost thou understand that, changeling, dangling thy hands like bobbins before thee? Why dost thou not stir, puppet? thou wooden thing upon wires.

*Peg.* Lord, madam, your ladyship so impatient—I cannot come at the paint, madam, Mrs. Foible has locked it up, and carried the key with her.

*Lady.* A pox take you both—fetch me the cherry-brandy then. [*Exit Peg*

*Lady.* I'm as pale and as faint, I look like Mrs. Qualmsick the curate's wife, that's always breeding. Wench, come, come, wench, what are thou doing, sipping? tasting? Save thee, dost thou not know the bottle?

*Peg.* Madam, I was looking for a cup.

*Lady.* A cup, save thee, and what a cup hast thou brought! Dost thou take me for a fairy, to drink out of an acorn? Why didst thou not bring thy thimble? Hast thou ne'er a brass thimble clinking in thy pocket with a bit of nutmeg? I warrant thee. Come, fill, fill. So—again. See who that is—[*One knocks*] Set down the bottle first. Here, here, under the table.—What, wouldst thou go with the bottle in thy hand like a tapster! As I'm a person, this wench has lived in an inn upon the road, before she came to me, like Maritornes the Asturian in *Don Quixote*. No Foible yet?

*Peg.* No, Madam, Mrs. Marwood.

*Lady.* Oh, Marwood, let her come in, good Marwood.

*Enter Mrs. Marwood*

*Mrs. Mar.* I'm surprised to find your ladyship in *deshabille* at this time of day.

## ACT THREE

**SCENE :** *A Room in Lady Wishfort's House*

*Lady Wishfort at her toilet, Peg waiting*

*Lady.* Merciful, is there no news of Foible as yet ?

*Peg.* No, madam.

*Lady.* I have no more patience if I got angry and worried I will be pale again, and there will be no truth in me. Bring me the red (rouge)—the red, do you hear, sweetheart ? My colour has become downright ash, as I'm a person. Look you how slow this wench is in her work ! Why don't you bring me a little red ? Didn't you hear me, you dull and spiritless girl ?

*Peg.* Does your ladyship mean the red ratafia (a kind of liquor), or the cherry-brandy ?

*Lady.* Ratafia, fool. No, fool. Not the ratafia, fool. Grant me patience ! I mean the Spanish paper idiot, rouge, darling. Paint, paint, paint ! do you understand that, you changling girl. Who are you dangling your hand before you like a bobbin ? Why don't you hurry, you puppet.

*Peg.* Lord, madam, your ladyship is so impatient—I cannot get the paint, madam, Mrs. Foible has locked it up, and carried away the key with her.

*Lady.* A pox take you both—fetch me the cherry-brandy then. [*Exit Peg.*

*Lady.* I am so pale and faint that I look like Mrs. Qualmsick the curate's wife, who is always breeding. Wench, come, come, wench, what are you doing, sipping ?

*Re-enter Peg with a bottle and china cup*

*Peg.* Madam. I was looking for a cup.

*Lady.* A cup, save you, and what a cup you have brought : Do you take me for a fairy to drink from such a small cup ? Why didn't you bring your thimble ? Didn't you have a brass thimble clinking in your pocket with a bit of nutmeg. I warn you, my dear, take care. Come, fill, fill. So again. See, who has come there.—(*One knocks*) Set down the bottle first. Here, here, under the table—What, do you think of going with the bottle like a bar waitress ! As I am a person, this wench must have lived in an inn upon the road before she came to me, like Maritones the Asturian in *Don Quixote* Has not Foible come back as yet ?

*Peg.* No. Madam, Mrs. Marwood.

*Lady.* Oh, Marwood, let her come in. Come in good Marwood.

*Enter Mrs. Marwood*

*Mrs. Mar.* I'm surprised to see your ladyship not dressed.

*Lady.* Foible's a lost thing; has been abroad since morning and never heard of since.

*Mrs. Mar.* I saw her but now, as I came masked through the Park, in conference with Mirabell.

*Lady.* With Mirabell! You call my blood into my face, with mentioning that traitor. She durst not have the confidence. I sent her to negotiate an affair, in which if I'm detected I'm undone. If that wheedling villain has wrought upon Foible to detect me, I'm ruined. Oh, my dear friend. I'm a wretch of wretches if I'm detected.

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, madam, you cannot suspect Mrs. Foible's integrity.

*Lady.* Oh, he carries poison in his tongue that would corrupt integrity itself. If she has given him an opportunity, she has as good as put her integrity into his hands. Ah, dear Marwood, what's integrity to an opportunity?—Hark! I hear her. Dear friend, retire into my closet, that I may examine her with more freedom. You 'll pardon me, dear friend, I can make bold with you. There are books over the chimney—Quarles and Prynne, and the *Short View of the Stage*, with Bunyan's works to entertain you.—Go, you thing, and send her in. [*To Peg*]

[*Exeunt Mrs. Marwood and Peg*

*Enter Foible*

*Lady.* O Fible, where hast thou been? what hast thou been doing?

*Foib.* Madam, I have seen the party.

*Lady.* But what hast thou done?

*Foib.* Nay, 'tis your ladyship has done, and are to do; I have only promised. But a man so enamoured—so transported! Well, if worshipping of pictures be a sin—poor Sir Rowland, I say.

*Lady.* The miniature has been counted like.—But hast thou not betrayed me, Foible? Hast thou not detected me to that faithless Mirabell? What hadst thau to do with him in the Park? Answer me, has he got nothing out of thee?

*Foib.* So, the devil has been beforehand with me, what shall I say?—Alas, madam, could I help it, if I met that confident thing? Was I in fault? If you had heard how he used me, and all upon your ladyship's account, I'm sure you would not suspect my fidelity. Nay, if that have been the worst I could have borne: but he had a fling at your ladyship too; and then I could not hold: but i' faith I gave him his own.

*Lady.* Me? What did the filthy fellow say?

*Lady.* Foible is lost; she has gone out in the morning, and has not been heard of since then.

*Mrs. Mar.* I saw her only now, as I was coming masked through the park. She was talking with Mirabell.

*Lady.* With Mirabell! You bring blood to my face by mentioning that traitor to me. I cannot dare have any confidence in her (Foible). I sent her to settle an affair, in which if I'm detected I'm undone. If that enticing villain has been successful in engaging Foible to detect me, I'm ruined. Oh, my dear friend I'm a wretch of wretches if I'm detected.

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, madam, you cannot suspect Mrs. Foible's integrity.

*Lady.* Oh, he (Mirabell) carries poison in his tongue that would corrupt even integrity itself. If she has given him an opportunity, she has as good as put her integrity into his hands. Ah, dear Marwood, what's the value of integrity when there's an opportunity to be dishonest ?—Hark! I hear her, Dear friend, retire into my closet, that I may question her with more freedom. You'll pardon me, dear friend, I can be informal with you. There are books over the chimney—Quarles and Prynne, and the *Short View of the Stage*, with Bunyan's works to entertain you—Go, you thing, and send her in.

*(To Peg.*

*(Exeunt Mrs. Marwood and Peg.)*

*Enter Foible*

*Lady.* O Foible, where have you been ?

*Foib.* Madam, I have seen the party.

*Lady.* But what have you done ?

*Foib.* Nay, it is your ladyship who has to do all that remains to be done; I have only promised. But he is a man so inspired with love and filled with ecstacy. Well, if worshipping of pictures is a sin—poor Sir Rowland, I say.

*Lady.* The miniature portrait is to be counted like the original. But have you not betrayed me, Foible ? Have you not disclosed my secrets to that faithless Mirabell ? What did you have to do with in the park ? Answer me, has he not pumped something out of you ?

*Foib.* So the devil (meaning Mrs. Mirabell) has overtaken me what shall I say ?—Alas madam, how could I help it, if I met that impudent man ? Was it my fault. If you had heard how badly he treated me, and all this on account of your ladyship that I had to suffer, I'm sure you would have any suspicion in my loyalty to you. I could have borne even the worst if it was against me, but he cast aspersions even upon you for which I could not restrain myself. But I have given him a return in equally bad way.

*Lady.* Did he say anything against me ?

*Foib.* Oh, madam; 'tis a shame to say what he said—with his taunts and his fleers, tossing up his nose. Humph (says he), what, you are a-hatching some plot (says he), you are so early abroad, or catering (says he), ferreting for some disbanded officer, I warrant—half-pay is but thin subsistence (says he)—well, what pension does your lady propose? Let me see (says he)—what, she must come down pretty deep now, she's superannuated (says he), and—

*Lady.* Odds my life, I'll have him, I'll have him murdered. I'll have him poisoned. Where does he eat? I'll marry a drawer to have him poisoned in his wine. I'll send for Robin from Lockets—immediately.

*Foib.* Poison him? Poisoning's too good for him. Starve him, madam, starve him; marry Sir Rowland, and get him disinherited. Oh, you would bless yourself, to hear what he said.

*Lady.* A villain, superannuated.

*Foib.* Humph (says he), I hear you are laying designs against me too (says he), and Mrs. Millamant is to marry my uncle (he does not suspect a word of your ladyship); but (says he) I'll fit you for that, I warrant you (says he), I'll hamper you for that (says he), you and your old frippery too (says he), I'll handle you—

*Lady.* Audacious villain; handle me, would he durst—Frippery! old frippery! Was there ever such a foul-mouthed fellow? I'll be contracted to-night.

*Foib.* The sooner the better, madam.

*Lady.* Will Sir Rowland be here, sayest thou? When, Foible?

*Foib.* Incontinently, madam. No new sheriff's wife expects the return of her husband after knight-hood, with that impatience in which Sir Rowland burns for the dear hours of kissing your ladyship's hand after dinner.

*Lady.* Frippery! superannuated frippery! I'll frippery the villain; I'll reduce him to frippery and rags: a tatterdemalion—I hope to see him hung with tatters, like a Long-Lane pent-house, or a gibbet-thief. A slander-mouthed railer: I warrant the spendthrift prodigal's in debt as much as the million lottery, or the whole court upon a birth-day. I'll spoil his credit with his tailor. Yes, he shall have my niece with her fortune, he shall.

*Foib.* He! I hope to see him lodge in Ludgate first, and angle into Black friars for brass farthings, with an old mitten.

*Lady.* Ay, dear Foible; thank thee for that, dear Foible. He has put me out of all patience. I shall never recompose my features to receive Sir Rowland with any economy of face. This wretch has fretted me that I am absolutely decayed. Look, Foible.

*Foib.* Oh, madam, it is a shame to utter what he said in his taunting and mocking way profound scorn. Humph (he says), what, are you hatching some plot (says he), you have come out so early today? Are you looking for (says he) or acting as procuress for some disbanded officer for your mistress (Lady Wishfort)? What extra allowance does your ladyship. Your ladyship is now extremely old, she must fix a very high sum to hire a lover (says he) and—

*Lady.* I'll have him murdered I'll have poisoned. I will rather marry a waiter to have him poisoned in his wine.

*Foib.* Poison him? Starve him, madam, starve him; marry Sir Rowland, and get him disinherited.

*Lady.* A villain. Does he say I am superannuated.

*Foib.* Humph (says he), I hear you are plotting something against me too, (says he), and Mrs. Millamant is to marry my uncle I'll see you both (says he), and I'll handle you properly for all this—

*Lady.* Audacious villain! does he want to handle me? would he dare do that—does he dare call me Frippery! Was there ever such a foul mouthed fellow?

*Foib.* The sooner the better, madam.

*Lady.* Will Sir Rowland be here, when will he come.

*Foib.* Immediately, madam. Rowland burns for the dear hour when he would be able to kiss the hand of your ladyship after dinner.

*Lady.* Frippery! Superannuated frippery! I will frippery that villain (Mirabell) myself; I will reduce him to that stage that he would not have anything but rags to wear: a ragged fellow—how I long to see him in that terrible condition. I would like to see him in the condition of a slopping roof in Long Lane (where old clothes are sold). I wish I could turn him a thief stealing clothes from hanged criminals. A slander-mouthed railer: I assure you that this spendthrift prodigal is heavily in debt. His expenses have been as lavish as that on birthday celebration in a court, and I will see how he comes out of the situation. I will ruin even his terms of credit with his tailor. Yes, he shall have my niece with her fortune, he shall.

*Foib.* Thinking of him to have your niece? I would rather hope to see him lodged in the debtor's prison first.

*Lady.* Let us hope so, dear Foible: thank you for all your foolings for me, dear Foible. He has thrown me out of patience. Now even with the best of my effort I will not be able to regain the serene, happy face of mine for the reception of Sir Rowland. This fellow has so vexed me that I am looking a hag now with my features absolutely decomposed. Look, Foible.

*Foib.* Your ladyship has frowned a little too rashly, indeed, madam. There are some cracks discernible in the white varnish.

*Lady.* Let me see the glass—Cracks, sayest thou ? Why, I am arrantly flayed—I look like an old peeled wall. Thou must repair me, Foible, before Sir Rowland comes ; or I shall never keep up to my picture.

*Foib.* I warrant you, madam ; a little art once made your picture like you ; and now a little of the same art must make you like your picture. Your picture must sit for you, madam.

*Lady.* But art thou sure Sir Rowland will not fail to come ? Or will he not fail when he does come ? Will he be importunate, Foible and push ? For if he should not be importunate, I shall never break decorums.—I shall die with confusion, if I am forced to advance.—Oh, no, I can never advance. I shall swoon if he should expect advances. No, I hope Sir Rowland is better bred, than to put a lady to the necessity of breaking her forms. I won't be too coy neither, I won't give him despair. But a little scorn is alluring.

*Foib.* A little scorn becomes your ladyship.

*Lady.* Yes, but tenderness becomes me best—a sort of dyingness.—You see that picture has a sort of a—ha, Foible ? A swimmingness in the eyes. Yes, I'll look so—my niece affects it ; but she wants features. Is Sir Rowland handsome ? Let my toilet be removed—I'll dress above. I'll receive Sir Rowland here. Is he handsome ? Don't answer me. I won't know : I'll be surprized. I'll be taken by surprize.

*Foib.* By storm, madam. Sir Rowland 's a brisk man.

*Lady.* Is he ! Oh, then he 'll importune, if he's a brisk man. I shall save decorums if Sir Rowland importunes. I have a mortal terror at the apprehension of offending against decorums. Oh, I'm glad he 's a brisk man. Let my things be removed, good Foible. [*Exit*

*Enter Mrs. Fainall*

*Mrs. Fain.* O Foible, I have been in a fright, lest I should come too late. That devil, Marwood, says you in the Park with Mirabell, and I'm afraid will discover it to my lady.

*Foib.* Discover what, madam ?

*Mrs. Fain.* Nay, nay, put not on that strange face. I am privy to the whole design, and know that Waitwell, to whom thou wert this morning married, is to personate Mirabell's uncle, and as such, winning my lady, to involve her in those difficulties from which Mirabell only must release her, by his making his conditions to have my cousin and her fortune left to her own disposal.

*Foib.* Your ladyship has frowned without even considering the consequence to your made-up face. There can be seen some new cracks in the white paint of your face.

*Lady.* Let me see the glass—cracks do you say? Why, my skin seems to have been completely peeled—I look like an old peeled wall.

*Foib.* I assure you, madam, you need not worry. You must be made to look like your picture, madam.

*Lady.* But are you sure that Sir Rowland will not fail to come? Or are you sure that he will disappoint me when he does come? Will he be pressing Foible, and push? For, if he is not pressing and does not make the advances, I will not encourage him to do so. I shall die of confusion and embarrassment if I am forced to make the advances from my side. Oh, I can never advance, I shall paint if he expects the advances to be made from my side. No, I hope Sir Rowland is bred better enough not to push a lady to the necessity of making any advance in love-making herself. Of course I wont be too shy either. I wont give him cause to be unhappy. But perhaps it will be alright if I pretend to hold myself in reserve and reject his advances.

*Foib.* Yes, A little scorn will be becoming.

*Lady.* Yes, but tenderness becomes me best—a sort of a soft and tender grace. My niece also assumes that kind of a grace. But she lacks good look. Is Sir Rowland handsome? Let my toilet be removed—I'll dress upstairs. I wish Sir Rowland was here. Is he handsome? Don't answer me. I don't like to know: I want to be surprised when the real one comes before me.

*Foib.* Sir Rowland is a vigorous type of man.

*Lady.* Is he! Oh, then he will be pressing if he is vigorous sort of a man. If Sir Rowland is pressing it will save me from all the botheration of making the advance myself. I have a great terror even at thinking that I should be made to go beyond the limits of modesty. Oh, I am glad to hear that he is a vigorous sort of man. *(Exit.*

***Enter Mrs. Fainall***

*Mrs. Fain.* O Foible, I have been very much frightened. That devil Marwood, saw you in the park with Mirabell, and I'm afraid she will disclose it to my lady.

*Foib.* Disclose what, madam?

*Mrs. Fain.* No, no, don't try to put on that strange face. I am acquainted with the whole plot, and know that Waitwell, with whom you were married this morning, is to represent as Mirabell's uncle, and thereby, after winning over my lady, will be creating that kind of complication and difficulties from which only Mirabell would be able to rescue her.

*Foib.* Oh, dear madam, I beg your pardon. It was not my confidence in your ladyship that was deficient; but I thought the former good correspondence between your ladyship and Mr. Mirabell might have hinderd his communicating this secret.

*Mrs. Fain.* Dear Foible, forget that.

*Foib.* Oh, dear madam, Mr. Mirabell is such a sweet winning gentleman. But your ladyship is the pattern of generosity. Sweet lady, to be so good! Mr. Mirabell cannot choose but be grateful. I find your ladyship has his heart still. Now, madam, I can safely tell your ladyship our success, Mrs. Marwood had told my lady; but I warrant I managed myself. I turned it all for the better. I told my lady that Mr. Mirabell railed at her. I laid horrid things to his charge, I'll vow; and my lady is so incensed, that she'll be contracted to Sir Rowland to-night, she says;—I warrant I worked her up, that he may have her for asking for, as they say of a Welsh maiden-head.

*Mrs. Fain.* Oh, rare Foible!

*Foib.* Madam, I beg your ladyship to acquaint Mr. Mirabell of his success. I would be seen as little as possible to speak to him—besides, I believe Madam Marwood watches me She has a month's mind; but I know Mr. Mirabell can't abide her—[*Calls*] John—remove my lady's toilet. Madam, your servant. My lady is so impatient, I fear she 'll come for me, if I stay.

*Mrs. Fain.* I'll go with you up the back stairs lest I should meet her. [*Exeunt*]

*Enter Mrs. Marwood*

*Mrs. Mar.* Indeed. Mrs. Eugine, is it thus with you? Are you become a go-between of this importance? Yes, I shall watch you. Why, this wench is the *passe-partout*, a very masterkey to everybody's strong box. My friend Fainall, have you carried it so swimmingly? I thought there was something in it; but it seems it 's over with you. Your loathing is not from a want of appetite then, but from a surfeit. Else you could never be so cool to fall from a principal to be an assistant; to procure for him! A pattern of generosity, that—I confess. Well, Mr. Fainall, you have met with your match—O man, man! Woman, woman! The devil's an ass: if I were a painter, I would draw him like an idiot, a driveller with a bib and bells. Man should have his head and horns, and woman the rest of him. Poor simple fiend! Madam Marwood has a month's mind, but he can't abide her. 'Twere better for him you had not been his confessor in that affair, without you could have kept his counsel closer. I shall not prove another pattern of generosity—he has not obliged me to that with those excesses of

*Foib.* Oh, dear madam, I beg your pardon.

*Mrs. Fain.* Dear Foible, forget that.

*Foib.* Oh, dear madam, Mr. Mirabell is such a sweet winning gentleman. But your ladyship is so generous as to help him despite the fact that you yourself have an affectionate concern for him. Sweet lady, you are so good. Mrs. Marwood had already told my ladyship about my meeting Mr. Mirabell ; but I assure you that I have been able to manage the whole thing myself. I worked her up in such a way that he may have her for just the asking, as they say of a Welsh maiden-head.

*Mrs. Fain.* Oh, you are quite rare, Foible !

*Foib.* Madam, I beg that your ladyship would acquaint Mr. Mirabell of his success. I would be rather seen as little as possible talking to him—besides, I believe Mrs. Marwood is keeping a watch over me. She has a liking for Mr. Mirabell ; but I know that Mr. Mirabell cannot tolerate her. (Calls) John—remove my lady's toilet. Madam, your servant. My lady is so impatient that I am afraid she will come down for me, if I stay with you any longer.

*Mrs. Fain.* I will go with you up the back stairs, lest I should meet her. (*Exeunt.*

*Enter Mrs. Marwood*

*Mrs. Mar.* Indeed Mrs. Eugine, is it this you are engaged in ? Have become an important agent of this scheme ? Yes, I will keep a watch over you. Why, this wench is the master-key ; she is the very master-key to everybody's strong box. My friend Fainall, you have carried the affair very successfully so far. I thought there was something in it but it seems your affair with Mirabell is now finished. Your hatred of man is not from a want of desire then ; it is in fact due to an excess of desire. Otherwise you could not be so cool to fall from being a mistress of Mirabell to an assistant : to be engaged to procure a mistress (Millamant) for him. I must confess that it is a new kind of generosity. Well Mr. Fainall, you have met your match.—O man, man ! Woman ! woman ! the devil's an ass : if I were a painter I would draw the devil like an idiot—an idiot with a bib and bells. Man should have his head and horns, and woman the rest of him. Poor simple devil. You say that Madam Marwood has a strong desire for him, only that he cannot stand her—it would have been better for him not to have you as his confesser, unless he was sure that you could keep his secret intact. In any case, I am not going to prove another pattern of generosity by being inactive now since Mirabell has not obliged me with any of his generosities himself ;

himself; and now I'll have none of him. Here comes the good lady, panting ripe; with a heart full of hope, and a head full of care, like any chemist upon the day of projection.

*Enter Lady Wishfort*

*Lady.* Oh, dear Marwood, what shall I say for this rude forgetfulness—but my dear friend is all goodness.

*Mrs. Mar.* No apologies, dear madam. I have been very well entertained.

*Lady.* As I'm a person, I am in a very chaos to think I should so forget myself—but I have such an olio of affairs really I know not what to do. [*Calls*] Foible—I expect my nephew Sir Wilful every moment too:—[*Calls again*] Why, Foible—he means to travel for improvement.

*Mrs. Mar.* Methinks Sir Wilful should rather think of marrying than travelling at his years. I hear he is turned of forty.

*Lady.* Oh, he's in less danger of being spoiled by his travels—I am against my nephew's marrying too young. It will be time enough when he comes back, and has acquired discretion to choose for himself.

*Mrs. Mar.* Methinks Mrs. Millamant and he would make a very fit match. He may travel afterwards. 'Tis a thing very usual with young gentlemen.

*Lady.* I promise you I have thought on 't—and since 'tis your judgment, I'll think on't again, I assure you I will; I value your judgment extremely. On my word I'll propose it.

*Enter Foible*

*Lady.* Come, come, Foible.—I had forgot my nephew will be here before dinner.—I must make haste.

*Foib.* Mr. Witwoud and Mr. Petulant are come to dine with your ladyship.

*Lady.* Oh, dear, I can't appear till I am dressed. Dear Marwood, shall I be free with you again, and beg you to entertain 'em. I'll make all imaginable haste. Dear friend, excuse me.

[*Exeunt Lady Wishfort and Foible*

*Enter Mrs. Millamant and Mincing*

*Milla.* Sure never anything was so unbred as that odious man. —Marwood, your servant.

*Mrs. Mar.* You have a colour, what's the matter.

*Milla.* That horrid fellow Petulant has provoked me into a flame—I have broke my fan. Mincing, lend me yours. —Is not all the powder out of my hair?

even if he wants to be generous now, I won't have it from him. Here comes the old lady, totally out of breath ; with a heart full of hope, and a head full of care just like an alchemist expecting the results of his experiment.

*Enter Lady Wishfort*

*Lady.* Oh, dear Marwood, what shall I say for this rude fo-- getfulness in keeping you in the closet so long.

*Mrs. Mar* I have been very well entertained.

*Lady.* As I'm a person, I am in a very chaos to think I should so forget myself ; but I have such a confused medley of affairs to think of that I do not know what to do. (Calls) Foible—I expect my nephew Sir Wilful every moment too :—Why Foible—he has the habit of travelling for imorovement of his knowledge and character.

*Mrs. Mar* I think Sir Wilful should rather think of marrying than travelling at his years. I hear he is now forty.

*Lady.* Oh no, he is not in much danger of being spoilt by his travels ; in fact, I am against my nephew's marrying so young. It will be the right time for his marriage when he comes back, because then he must have acquired the discretion to choose for himself.

*Mrs. Mar* I think Mrs. Millamant and he would make a very good match. He may travel afterwards. It is a thing very usual with young gentlemen.

*Lady.* I promise you I thought on it --and since you think in the same way, I will think on it again. I assure you I will ; I value your judgment very strongly. On my word I will propose it to my nephew.

*Enter Foible*

*Lady.* Come, come, Foible. I forget that my nephew will be here before dinner. I must make haste.

*Foib.* Mr. Witwoud and Mr. Petulant have come to dine with your ladyship.

*Lady.* Oh, dear I can't appear before them till I am properly dressed. Dear Marwood, shall I beg you to entertain them on my behalf. I will make all imaginable haste. Dear friend, excuse me.

(*Exeunt Lady Wishfort and Foible.*

*Enter Mrs. Millamant and Mincing*

*Milla.* Surely there was never anything so unbred as odius man. Marwood, your servant.

*Mrs. Mar.* Your face is very much coloured. What is the matter ?

*Milla.* That horrid fellow, Petulant has provoked me into a flame (made me so angry). I have broken my fan in rage. Mincing, lend me your fan. Is not all the powder out of my hair ?

*Mrs. Mar.* No. What has he done?

*Milla.* Nay, he has done nothing; he has only talked. Nay, he has said nothing neither: but he has contradicted everything that has been said. For my part, I thought Witwoud and he would have quarrelled.

*Minc.* I vow, mem, I thought once they would have fitt.

*Milla.* Well, 'tis a lamentable thing, I swear, that one has not the liberty of choosing one's acquaintance as one does one's clothes.

*Mrs. Mar.* If we had that liberty, we should be as weary of one set of acquaintance, though never so good, as we are of one suit, though never so fine. A fool and a doily stuff would now and then find days of grace, and be worn for variety.

*Milla.* I could consent to wear'em, if they would wear alike; but fools never wear out—they are such *drap-de-berry* things! Without one could give'em to one's chambermaid after a day or two.

*Mrs. Mar.* 'Twere better so indeed. Or what think you of the play-house? A fine gay glossy fool should be given there, like a new masking habit, after the masquerade is over, and we have done with the disguise. For a fool's visit is always a disguise; and never admitted by a woman of wit, but to blind her affair with a lover of sense. If you would but appear barefaced now, and own Mirabell you might as easily put off Petulant and Witwoud, as your hood and scarf. And indeed 'tis time, for the town has found it: the secret is grown too big for the pretence: 'tis like Mrs. Primly's great belly; she may lace it down before, but it burnishes on her hips. Indeed, Millamant, you can no more conceal it, than my Lady Strammel can her face, that goodly face, which in defiance of her Rhenish-wine tea, will not be comprehended in a mask.

*Milla.* I'll take my death, Marwood, you are more censorious than a decayed beauty, or discarded toast. Mincing, tell the men they may come up. My aunt is not dressing here; their folly is less provoking than your malice. [*Exit Wincing*] The town has found it. What has it found? That Mirabell loves me is no more a secret, than it is a secret that you discovered it to my aunt, or than the reason why you discovered it is a secret.

*Mrs. Mar.* You are nettled.

*Milla.* You're mistaken. Ridiculous!

*Mrs. Mar.* Indeed, my dear, you,ll tear another fan, if you don't mitigate those violent airs.

*Milla.* Oh, silly! Ha, ha, ha! I could laugh immoderately. Poor Mirabell! His constancy to me has quite destroyed his complaisance or all the world beside: I swear,

*Mrs. Mar.* No. What has he done ?

*Milla.* Well, he has done nothing ; he has only talked. He has contradicted everything that has been said. For my part, I thought Witwoud and he would have quarrelled.

*Minc.* I vow, mem, I thought once they would have fought.

*Milla.* Well, it's a lamentable thing, that one has not the liberty of choosing one's acquaintance as one does one's clothes.

*Mrs. Mar.* A fool and a coarse stuff sometimes may be a welcome relief, and may be accepted for the sake of variety.

*Milla.* I could be willing to stand them if they were not to last long ; but fools never wear out (that is, they remain over the same): they are such coarse and strong woollen clothes, unless of course one could give them over to one's chambermaid after a day or two.

*Mrs. Mar.* It is better that way, indeed. Or what do you think of the playhouse ?A visit of a fool is always utilised as a kind of disguise, and he is admitted by a woman of wit only to shield her love—affair with a lover of sense. If you but come out in the open new and declare your love for Mirabell you could easily discard both Petulant and Witwoud, as you do your hood and scarf. And indeed it is time that you should openly admit Mirabell as your lover, for it is not a matter of any more secret in the town; however much you may try to hide it, the secret of your love is known to all. It is just like Mrs. Primly who cannot conceal her pregnancy by means of laces, because it comes out prominently on her hips. Indeed Millamant, you can no more conceal it, just as Lady Strammel cannot conceal in a mask the growing fat on her face in spite of her taking Rhenish—wine tea.

*Milla* I will take my death, Marwood, you seem to be more censorious than a worn-out beauty, or a woman who is no more toasted because of her lost beauty ; Mincing, tell the men they may come up My aunt is not dressing here. Their folly will seem to me less provoking than your malice. (Exit Mincing) The town has found it. What has it found ? that Mirabell loves me is no more a secret, than it is a secret that you disclosed it to my aunt. Is there a secret that you disclosed it to my aunt because Mirabell did not care to pay attention to your advances ?

*Mrs. Mar,* You are angry.

*Milla.* You are mistaken. Ridiculous !

*Mrs. Mar.* My dear, you will tear another fan if you do not control your violent anger.

*Milla.* Oh, silly ! Ha, ha, ha ! I could laugh immoderately. Poor Mirabell ! His constancy to me has put a stop to his obligations to all the world beside. I swear.

I never enjoined it him, to be so coy.—If I had the vanity to think he would obey me, I would command him to show more gallantry.—'Tis hardly well bred to be so particular on one hand, and so insensible on the other. But I despair to prevail, and so let him follow his own way. Ha, ha, ha! Pardon me, dear creature, I must laugh, ha, ha, ha! though I grant you 'tis a little barbarous, ha, ha, ha!

*Mrs. Mar.* What pity 'tis, so much fine raillery, and delivered with so significant gesture, should be so unhappily directed to miscarry.

*Milla.* Ha? Dear creature, I ask your pardon.—I swear I did not mind you.

*Mrs. Mar.* Mr. Mirabell and you both may think it a thing impossible, when I shall tell him by telling you—

*Milla.* Oh, dear, what? For it is the same thing, if I hear it. Ha, ha, ha!

*Mrs. Mar.* That I detest him, hate him, madam.

*Milla.* Oh, madam, why, so do I—and yet the creature loves me, ha, ha, ha! How can one forbear laughing to think of it? I am a sybil if I am not amazed to think what he can see in me. I 'll take my death, I think you are handsomer—and within a year or two as young. If you could but stay for me, I should overtake you—but that cannot be. Well, that thought makes me melancholic—now I 'll be sad.

*Mrs. Mar.* Your merry note may be changed sooner than you think.

*Milla.* D' ye say so? Then I 'm resolved I 'll have a song to keep up my spirits.

*Enter Mincing*

*Minc.* The gentlemen stay but to comb, madam; and will wait on you.

*Milla.* Desire Mrs.—that is in the next room to sing the song I would have learnt yesterday. You shall hear it, madam.—Not that there 's any great matter in it—but 'tis agreeable to my humour.

I never enjoined it to him, to be negligent of others. If I were vain enough to think that I had power over him, I would ask him to be more sensible of the merit of other women besides—it is hardly a sign of good breeding to be so attentive to one and so negligent towards others. But I do not hope to persuade him in this matter, so let him follow his own way. Ha, ha, ha! Pardon me, dear creature, I must laugh, ha, ha, ha! though I admit that it is little barbarous to laugh like this, ha, ha, ha!

*Mrs. Mar.* What a pity it is that so much of raillery delivered with such a meaningful air should fail to produce any effect on me.

*Milla.* Ha? Dear creature, I must ask your pardon. I swear I did not mean it for you.

*Mrs. Mar.* Mr. Mirabell and you may both think it a thing impossible, when I shall tell him by telling you—

*Milla.* Oh, dear, what? for it is the same thing if I hear it. Ha, ha, ha.

*Mrs. Mar.* That I detest him, hate him, madam.

*Milla.* Oh, madam, why, so do I, and that creature goes on loving me, ha, ha, ha! how can anybody stop laughing to think of it? Since I am not a Sybil (prophetess), I cannot say what Mirabell sees in me to love me. I am sure, I think you are handsomer—and within a year or two as young. If you were to stay where you are (that is not grow old) I would soon overtake you—but that cannot be. Well, this thought makes me melancholic—now I will be sad on account of this.

*Mrs. Mar.* Your merry note may be changed sooner than you think.

*Milla.* Do you say so? Then I am determined that I will have a song to keep up my spirits.

*Enter Mincing*

*Minc.* The gentlemen are just taking time to comb, madam they will wait on you presently.

*Milla.* Call Mrs.—that is in the next room to sing the song I would have learnt yesterday. You shall hear it, madam. Not that there is any great matter in it—but it pleases my mood.

## SONG

I

Love's but the frailty of the mind,
When 'tis not with ambition joined ;
A sickly flame, which if not fed expires ;
And feeding, wastes in self-consuming fires.

II

Tis not to wound a wanton boy
Or am'rous youth, that gives the joy ;
But 'tis the glory to have pierced a swain,
For whom inferior beauties sighed in vain.

III

Then I alone the conquest prize,
When I insult a rival's eyes :
If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart which others bleed for, bleed for me.

*Enter Petulant and Witwoud*

*Milla.* Is your animosity composed, gentlemen ?

*Wit.* Raillery, raillery, madam, we have no animosity—we hit off a little wit now and then, but no animosity. The falling out of wits is like the falling out of lovers. We agree in the main like treble and bass. Ha, Petulant ?

*Pet.* Ay, in the main, but when I have a humour to contradict—

*Wit.* Ay, when he has a humour to contradict, then I contradict too. What, I know my cue. Then we contradict one another like two battledores ; for contradictions beget one another like Jews.

*Pet.* If he says black's black—if I have a humour to say 'tis blue—let that pass—all's one for that. If I have a humour to prove it, it must be granted.

*Wit.* Not positively must—but it may—it may.

*Pet.* Yes, it positively must, upon proof positive.

*Wit.* Ay, upon proof positive it must ; but upon proof presumptive it only may. That's a logical distinction now, madam.

*Mrs. Mar.* I perceive your debates are of importance, and very learnedly handled.

*Pet.* Importance is one thing, and learning 's another ; but a debate 's a debate, that I assert.

## SONG

### I

Love's but the frailty of the mind,
When 'tis not with ambition joined ;
A sickly flame, which if not fed expires ;
And feeding, wastes in self-con'uming fires.

### II

'Tis not to wound a wanton boy
Or am'rous youth, that gives the joy ;
But 'tis glory to have pierced a swain,
For whom inferior beauties sighed in vain.

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Then I alone the conquest prise,
When I insult a rival's eyes :
If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart which others bleed for, bleed for me.

*Enter Petulant and Witwoud*

*Milla.* Is your animosity composed, gentlemen ?

*Wit.* Raillery, raillery, madam. we do not have animosity—we hit off a little wit now and then, but no animosity. The quarrelling of wits is like the quarrelling of lovers. We agree in the main, like treble and bass. Ha, Petulant ?

*Pet.* Aye, in the main, but when I have a humour to contradict—

*Wit.* Aye, when he has a humour to contradict, then I contradict him too. Yes I know when it is hinted. The moment I get the cue we start contradicting one another like two shuttlecocks ; because one contradiction breeds another contradiction just like the jews breeding children.

*Pet.* If he says black's black—and if I am in a mood to say it is blue—let's that pass—all is one for that matter. If I have a mood to prove it, it must be granted.

*Wit.* Not positively must, but it may—it may.

*Pet.* Yes it positively must, upon proof positive.

*Wit.* Aye, upon proof positive it must ; but upon proof whieh just assumed it only may. This is a logical distinction now, madam.

*Mrs. Mar.* I realise that your debates take very important turns, and are very learnedly handled.

*Pet.* Importance is one thing and learning is another ; but a debate is a debate, I assert.

*Wit.* Petulant 's an enemy to learning he relies altogether on his parts.

*Pet.* No, I 'm no enemy to learning ; it hurts not me.

*Mrs. Mar.* That 's a sign indeed it 's no enemy to you.

*Pet.* No, no, it 's no enemy to anybody, but them that have it.

*Milla.* Well, an illiterate man 's my aversion, I wonder at the impudence of any illiterate man, to offer to make love.

*Wit.* That I confess I wonder at too.

*Milla.* Ah ! to marry an ignorant ! that can hardly read or write.

*Pet.* Why should a man be any further from being married though he can't read, than he is from being hanged ? The ordinary 's paid for setting the Psalm, and the parish-priest for reading the ceremony. And for the rest which is to follow in both cases, a man may do it without book so all 's one for that.

*Milla.* D 'ye hear the creature ? Lord, here 's company, I 'll be gone. [*Exeunt Millamant and Mincing*

*Enter Sir Wilful Witwoud in a riding dress, and Footman*

*Wit.* In the name of Bartlemew and his fair, what have we here.

*Mrs. Mar.* 'Tis your brother, I fancy. Don't you know him ?

*Wit.* Not I. Yes, I think it is he.—I 've almost forgot him ; I have not seen him since the Revolution.

*Foot.* Sir, my lady's dressing. Here 's company ; if you please to walk in, in the meantime.

*Sir Wil.* Dressing ! What, it 's but morning here I warrant with you in London ; we should count it towards afternoon in our parts, down in Shrophire. Why, then, belike my aunt han't dined yet—ha, friend ?

*Foot.* Your aunt, sir ?

*Sir Wil.* My aunt, sir, yes, my aunt, sir, and your lady, sir ; your lady is my aunt, sir.—Why, what dost thou not know me, friend ? Why then, send somebody hither that does. How long hast thou lived with thy lady, fellow, ha ?

*Foot.* A week, sir ; longer than anybody in the house, except my lady's woman.

*Sir Wil.* Why, then, belike thou dost not know thy lady, if thou seest her, ha, friend ?

*Foot.* Why truly, sir, I cannot safely swear to her face in a morning before she is dressed. 'Tis like I may give a shrewd guess at her by this time.

*Sir Wil.* Well, prithee try what thou canst do ; if thou canst not guess, enquire her out, dost hear, fellow ? And tell her, her nephew, Sir Wilful Witwoud, is in the house.

*Wit* Petulant is an enemy to learning ; he relies altogether on his parts.

*Pet.* No, I'm no enemy to learning ; it does not hurt me.

*Mrs. Mar.* That is a sign indeed that it is no enemy to you.

*Pet.* No, no, it is enemy to only those that have it.

*Milla.* Well, I cannot stand an illiterate man. I get surprised at the impudence of any illiterate man to come to offer to make love.

*Wit.* I confess, I also wonder at that too.

*Milla.* Ah, to think of marrying an ignorant man who can hardly read or write.

*Pet.* Why should not an illiterate man be as well hanged as married ? Just as the chaplain of the prison is paid for setting the psalm at the time of hanging: so the parish priest is paid for 'reading the ceremony' at the time of marriage. A man may do it without book so all is one for that.

*Milla.* Do you hear what the creature says ? Lord, here some gentlemen are coming, I will be gone.

*(Exeunt Millamant and Mincing.)*

*Enter Sir Wiful Witwoud in a riding dress, and Footman*

*Wit.* In the name Bartlemew and his fair, what have we here?

*Mrs. Mar.* 'Tis your brother, I think. Don't you know him ?

*Wit.* Not I. Yes, I think it is he. I have almost forgotten him ; I have not seen him since the Revolution.

*Foot.* Sir, my lady is dressing. Here's company ; if you please to walk in, in the meantime.

*Sir Wil.* Dressing ; Why, it is only morning here ! it starts late in London ; in our part of the country, down in Shropshire, we should count it as afternoon. Why then, my aunt may not have dined as yet—ha, friend ?

*Foot.* Your aunt, sir ?

*Sir Wil.* My aunt, sir, yes, my aunt, sir, and your lady, sir ; your lady is my aunt, sir. Why, what, do you not know me, friend ? Why, send here somebody that does. How long have you been living with your lady, fellow, ha ?

*Foot.* A week, sir ; longer than anybody in the house, except my lady's woman.

*Sir Wil.* Why it is likely that you may not know your own lady, if you see her, ha, friend ?

*Foot.* It is true, sir, I cannot safely swear to her face in a morning, before she is dressed. It is likely that I may only make a shrewd guess at her by this time.

*Sir Wil.* Well, I request you to do whatever you can do : if you cannot guess, enquire her out, do you hear, fellow ? And tell her, that her nephew, Sir Wilful Witwoud, is in the house.

*Foot.* I shall, sir.

*Sir Wil.* Hold ye, hear me, friend ; a word with you in your ear, prithee who are these gallants ?

*Foot.* Really, sir, I can't tell ; here come so many here, 'tis hard to know 'em all. [*Exit*

*Sir Wil.* Oons, this fellow knows less than a starling ; I don't think a' knows his own name.

*Mrs. Mar.* Mr. Witwoud, your brother is not behind-hand in forgetfulness. I fancy he has forgot you too.

*Wit.* I hope so—The devil take him that remembers first, say.

*Sir Wil.* Save you, gentlemen and lady.

*Mrs. Mar.* For shame, Mr. Witwoud why won't you speak to him ? —And you, sir.

*Wit.* Petulant, speak.

*Pet.* And you, sir.

*Sir Wil.* No offence, I hope. [*Salutes Mrs. Marwood*]

*Mrs. Mar.* No, sure, sir.

*Wit.* This is a vile dog, I see that already. No offence ! Ha, ha, ha ! To him ; to him, Petulant, smoke him.

*Pet.* It seems as if you had come a journey sir ; hem, hem. [*Surveying him round*]

*Sir Wil.* Very likely, sir, that it may seem so.

*Pet.* No offence, I hope, sir.

*Wit.* Smoke the boots, the boots ; Petulant, the boots ; ha, ha, ha !

*Sir Wil.* Maybe not, sir ; thereafter as 'tis meant, sir.

*Pet.* Sir, I presume upon the information of your boots.

*Sir Wil.* Why, 'tis like you may, sir : if you are not satisfied with the information of my boots, sir, if you will step to the stable, you may enquire further of my horse, sir.

*Pet.* Your horse, sir ! Your horse is an ass, sir ?

*Sir Wil.* Do you speak by way of offence, sir ?

*Mrs. Mar.* The gentleman's merry, that's all, sir. [*Aside*] 'Slife, we shall have a quarrel betwixt an horse and an ass, before they find one another out. [*Aloud*] You must not take anything amiss from your friends, sir. You are among your friends here, though it may be you don't know it. If I am not mistaken you are Sir Wilful Witwoud.

*Sir Wil.* Right, lady ; I am Sir Wilful Witwoud, so I write myself; no offence to anybody, I hope ; and nephew to the Lady Wishfort of this mansion.

*Mrs. Mar.* Don't you know this gentleman, sir ?

*Sir Wil.* Hum ! what, sure 'tis not—Yea, By our Lady, but 'tis. 'Sheart, I know not whether 'tis or no. Yea, but 'tis, by the Wrekin. Brother Antony ! What Tony, i' faith ! What, dost thou not know me ? By our Lady, nor I

*Foot.* I shall, Sir.

*Sir Wil.* Hold you, hear me freind : a word with you in your ear ; would·you please tell me who are these gallants ?

*Foot.* Really speaking, sir, I cannot tell ; so many people come here, it is difficult to know them all. [*Exit*]

*Sir Wil* 'Swounds, this fellow knows less than a sterling (small bird) ; I don't think he even knows his own name.

*Mrs. Mar.* Mr. Witwoud, your brother is not behindhand in forgetfulness I imagine he has forgotten you too.

*Wit.* I hope so. The devil takes him that remembers first, I say.

*Sir Wil.* Save you gentlemen and lady.

*Mrs. Mar.* For shame, Mr. Witwoud ; why don't you speak.

*Wit.* Petulant, speak.

*Pet.* And you, sir.

*Sir Wil.* No offence, I hope. (*Salutes Mrs. Marwood.*)

*Mrs. Mar.* No, sure, sir.

*Wit.* This is a vile dog, I see that already. No offence ! Ha, ha, ha ! To him to him, Petulant, smoke him. (make fun of him)

*Pet.* It seems as if you had come on a journey, sir ; hem, hem. (*Surveying him round.*)

*Sir Wil.* Very likely, sir, that it may seem so.

*Pet.* No offence, I hope, sir.

*Wit.* Make fun of his boots, the boots ; Petulant, the boots !

*Sir Wil.* Maybe not, sir ; thereafter as it is meant, sir

*Pet.* Sir, I understand that upon the information your boots supply.

*Sir Wil.* Why, it is likely that you may, sir : if you are not satisfied with the information of my boots, sir, you may kindly step into my stable, and enquire further of my horse, sir !

*Pet.* Your horse, sir ! Your horse is an ass, sir !

*Sir Wil.* Do you speak by way of offence, sir ?

*Mrs. Mar.* The gentleman is just merry, that is all, sir. (*Aside*) 'Slife, we shall have a quarrel between a horse and an ass, before they find one another out. (Aloud) You should not misunderstand anything from your friends, sir. You are among your friends here, though it may be you don't know about it. If I am not mistaken, you are Sir Wilful Witwoud.

*Sir Wil.* Right, lady : I am Sir Wilful Witwoud, so I write myself ; no offence to anybody, I hope ; and I am nephew to the Lady Wishfort of this mansion.

*Mrs. Mar.* Don't you know this gentleman, sir ?

*Sir Wil.* Hum ! Sure it is not—Yea, by our Lady, but it is. 'Sheart, I do not know whether it is or not. Yes, but it is, by the Wrekin. Brother Antony ! What, Tony i'fatih ! What, do you not know me ? By our Lady, nor do I know you.

thee, thou art so becravated, and so beperiwigged. Sheart, why dost not speak? Art thou o'erjoyed?

*Wit.* Odso, brother, is it you? Your servant, brother.

*Sir Wil.* Your servant! Why yours, sir. Your servant again. 'Sheart, and your friend and servant to that—and a—(*puff*) and a flap dragon for your service, sir; and a hare's foot, and a hare's scut for your service, sir; and you be so cold and so courtly!

*Wit.* No offence, I hope, brother.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, sir, but there is, and much offence—A pox, is this your Inns o'Court breeding, not to know your friends and your relations, your elders, and your betters?

*Wit.* Why, brother Wilful of Salop, you may be as short as a Shrewsbury cake, if you please. But I tell you 'tis not modish to know relations in town. You think you 're in the country, where great lubberly brothers slabber and kiss one another when they meet, like a call of serjeants—'Tis not the fashion here; 'tis not indeed, dear brother.

*Sir Wil.* The fashion's a fool; and you 're a fop, dear brother. 'Sheart, I've suspected this.—By our Lady, I conjectured you were a fop, since you began to change the style of your letters, and write in a scrap of paper gilt round the edges, no bigger than a subpoena. I might expect this when you left off. Honoured Brother; and hoping you are in good health, and so forth—to begin with a Rat me, Knight, I'm so sick of a last night's debauch. Ods heart, and then tell a familiar tale of a cock and a bull, and a whore and a bottle, and so conclude. You could write news before you were out of your time, when you lived with honest Pumple-Nose, the attorney of Furnival's Inn. You could entreat to be remembered then to your friends round the Wrekin. We could have *Gazettes* then, the *Dawk's Letter* and the *Weekly Bill*, *till* of late days.

*Pet.* 'Slife, Witwoud, were you ever an attorney's clerk? Of the family of the Furnivals? Ha, ha, ha!

*Wit.* Ay, ay, but that was but for a while. Not long, not long; pshaw, I was not in my own power then. An orphan, and this fellow was my guardian; ay, ay, I was glad to consent to that man to come to London. He had the disposal of me then. If I had not agreed to that, I might have been bound prentice to a felt-maker in Shrewsbury; this fellow would have bound me to a maker of felts.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, and better than to be bound to a maker of fops; where, I suppose, you have served your time; and now you may set up for yourself.

*Mrs. Mar.* You intend to travel, sir, as I'm informed.

*Sir Wil.* Belike I may, madam. I may chance to sail upon the salt seas, if my mind hold.

You are putting on such a big cravat, and wigged in such way. 'Sheart, why don't you speak? It is because you are overjoyed?

*Wit.* Odso, brother, is it you? Yuor servant, brother.

*Sir Wil.* Your servant! Why yours sir. Your servant again. (I care a fig for your service, Sir, if you are so cold and pretend to be so formal.

*Wit.* No offence, I hope, brother.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, sir, but there is offence, and much offence.—A pox, not to know your friends and relations, your elders and your betters?

*Wit.* Why, brother Wilful of Salop, you may be as short as a Shrewsbury cake, if you please. But let me tell you it is not considered fashionable in town to recognise relations. You are still thinking you are in the country where great clumsy brothers become so sentimental and kiss one another when they meet, like call of sergeants —'Tis not the fashion here: 'Tis not indeed. dear brother.

*Sir Wil.* The fashion is a fool; and you are a fob, dear brother. 'Sheart, I had suspected this—By our Lady, I had an idea that you have become a fop, since you began to change the style of your letters, and write in a scrap of paper gilt round the edges, no bigger than a court summons. I expected this much, when you stopped beginning your letter with 'Honoured Brother': and hoping you are in good health, and so forth. To begin with a Rat me, Knight. I am so sick of boozing last night. Ods heart, and then tell a familiar made up story of a whore and a bottle, and conclude the letter. When you lived with honest Pumple Nose, the attorney of Furnival's Inn, the time when you were still not of your native modesty, you used to give all the information. You then wanted to be remembered by your friends round the Wrekin. We did receive from you in those days *Gazetls*, *Dawks's Letters*, and the *Weekly Bill*, till of late days.

*Pet.* 'Slife, were you ever an attorney's clerk? Ha, ha, ha.

*Wit.* Yes, yes, that was but for a while. Not long, not long: Pshaw, I was not in my own power then. I was an orphan, and this fellow was my guardian. He had all the authority over me then. If I had not agreed to that, I might have been engaged as an apprentice to a felt hat maker in Shrewsbury; this fellow would have engaged me to a maker of felts.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, that would have been much better than to have engaged to be a fop; now, I suppose you have completed your terms; and now you may settle for yourself.

*Mrs. Mar.* You intend to travel, sir, as I am informed.

*Sir Wil.* Possibly I may, madam. I may take an opportunity of sailing upon the Salt Seas, if I feel like that.

*Pet.*. And the wind serve.

*Sir Wil.* Serve or not serve, I shan't ask licence of you, sir; nor the weather-cock your companion. I direct my discourse to the lady, sir. 'Tis like my aunt may have told you, madam. Yes, I have settled my concerns, I may say now, and am minded to see foreign parts. If and how that the peace holds, whereby that is taxes abate.

*Mrs. Mar.* I thought you had designed for France at all adventures.

*Sir Wil.* I can't tell that; 'tis like I may, and 'tis like I may not. I am somewhat dainty in making a resolution, because when I make it I keep it. I don't stand shill I, shall I, then; if I say't, I'll do't. But I have thoughts to tarry a small matter in town, to learn somewhat of your lingo first, before I cross the seas. I'd gladly have a spice of your French as they say, whereby to hold discourse in foreign countries.

*Mrs. Mar* Here's an academy in town for that use.

*Sir Wil.* There is? 'Tis like there may.

*Mrs. Mar* No doubt you will return very much improved.

*Wit.* Yes, refined like Dutch skipper from a whalefishing.

*Enter Lady Wishfort and Fainall*

*Lady.* Nephew, you are welcome.

*Sir Wil.* Aunt, your servant.

*Fain.* Sir Wilful, your most faithful servant.

*Sir Wil.* Cousin Fainall, give me your hand.

*Lady.* Cousin Witwoud, your servant; Mr. Petulant, your servant—nephew, you are welcome again. Will you drink anything after your journey, nephew, before you eat? Dinner's almost ready.

*Sir Wil.* I'm very well, I think you, aunt. However, I thank you for your courteous offer. 'Sheart, I was afraid you would have been in the fashion too, and have remembered to have forgot your relations. Here 's your cousin Tony, belike, I may n't call him brother for fear of offence.

*Lady* Oh, he's a rallier, nephew—my cousin's a wit; and your great wits always rally their best friends to choose. When you have been abroad, nephew, you'll understand raillery better.

(*Fainall and Mrs. Marwood talk apart*).

*Sir Wil.* Why then let him hold his tongue in the meantime, and rail when that day comes.

*Enter Mincing*

*Minc.* Mem, I come to acquaint your la'ship that dinner is impatient.

*Sir Wil.* Impatient? Why then belike it won't stay till I pull off my boots. Sweetheart, can you help me to a pair of slippers?—My man's with his horses, I warrant.

*Pet.* And provided the wind is willing to serve you.

*Sir Wil.* Serve or not serve, I am not going to ask your permission, sir. I am talking to the lady, sir. It is likely that my aunt have told you about my journey, madam. Yes, I am now desirous of going to see foreign countries, provided that the present condition ofp eace endures.

*Mrs. Mar.* I thought, in any case, you intend to go to France.

*Sir Wil.* I can't tell you about that : it is also likely that I may not. I am somewhat fastidious in making a resolution, because when I make it I keep it. I have a mind to stay for a short while in town, to learn somewhat of your language (of the fashionable class) first, before I cross the seas. I will gladly have a slight knowledge of French as they say, just to help myself in conversing with people in foreign countries.

*Mrs. Mar* There is an academy in the town which may be useful.

*Sir Wil.* Is there one ? Then it may prove useful.

*Mrs. Mar.* There is no doubt that when you come back from abroad, you will be found very improved.

*Wit.* Yes, we will find you as refined as a master of a small trading vessel just returned from whale-fishing.

*Enter Lady Wishfort and Fainall*

*Lady.* Nephew, you are welcome.

*Sir Wil.* Aunt, your servant.

*Fain.* Sir Wilful, your most faithful servant.

*Sir Wil.* Cousin Fainall, give me your hand.

*Lady.* Cousin Witwoud, your servant; Mr. Petulant, your servant. Will you drink anything after your journey, nephew, before you eat ? Dinner is almost ready.

*Sir Wil.* I am very well, I thank you, aunt. However, I thank you for your courteous offer. 'Sheart, I was afraid you too would behave in a fashionable way, and have thought of forgetting your relations. Here you find your cousin Tony too, whom I dare not call a brother for fear of offending him.

*Lady.* Oh, don't mind him seriously, he is a person who likes to go on having jokes with everyone. When you have been abroad, nephew, you will understand raillery better.

*Fainall and Mrs. Marwood talk apart.*

*Sir Wil.* Why then do you allow him to hold his tongue in the meantime ; he need not wait to rail me when I am returned from abroad.

*Enter Mincing*

*Minc.* Mem, your dinner is impatient.

*Sir Wil.* Impatient ? Why, it is likely then that it won't wait for me till I pull off my boots. Sweetheart, can you help me to get a pair of slippers ?—I am sure, my man is still engaged with the horses.

*Lady.* Fie, fie, nephew, you would not pull off your boots here—go down into the hall—dinner shall stay for you. My nephew's a little unbred, you 'll pardon him, madam. Gentlemen, will you walk? Marwood?

*Mrs. Mar.* I 'll follow you, madam,—before Sir Wilful is ready.

(*Exeunt all except Fainall and Mrs. Marwood*)

*Fain.* Why then Foible 's a bawd, an errant, rank, match-making bawd. And I, it seems, am a husband, a rank husband: and my wife a very errant, rank wife,—all in the Way of the World. 'Sdeath, to be a cuckold by anticipation, a cuckold in embryo! Sure I was born with budding antlers like a young satyr, or a citizen's child. 'Sdeath, to be out-witted, to be out-jilted, out-matrimonied, If I had kept my speed like a stag, 'twere some-what,—but to crawl after, with my horns like a snail, and be outstripped by my wife—'tis scurvy wedlock.

*Mrs. Mar.* Then shake it off, you have often wished for an opportunity to part; and now you have it. But first prevent their plot: lhe half of Millamant's fortune is too considerabie to be parted with, to foe, to Mirabell.

*Fain.* Damn him, that had been mine, had you not made that fond discovery—that had been forfeited, had they been married. My wife had added lustre to my horns, by that increase of fortune, I could have worn 'em tipped with gold. though my forehead had been furnished like a deputy-lieutenant's hall.

*Mrs. Mar.* They may prove a cap of maintenance to you still, if you can away with your wife. And she's no worse than when you had her. I dare swear she had given up her game, before she was married.

*Fain.* Hum! That may be—

*Mrs. Mar.* You married her to keep you; and if you can contrive to have her keep you better than you expected, why should you not keep her longer than you intended?

*Fain.* The means, the means.

*Mrs. Mar.* Discover to my lady your wife's conduct: threaten to part with her—my lady loves her, and will come to any composition to save her reputation. Take the opportunity of breaking it, just upon the discovery of this imposture. My lady will be enraged beyond bounds, and sacrifice niece, and fortune, and all at that conjuncture. And let me alone to keep her warm; if she should flag in her part, I will not fail to prompt her.

*Fain.* Faith, this has an appearance.

*Mrs. Mar.* I'm sorry I hinted to my lady to endeavour a match between Millamant and Sir Wilful, that may be an obstacle.

*Fain.* Oh, for that matter leave me to manage him; I 'll

*Lady.* Fie, fie, nephew, you would not pull off your boots here —go down into the hall—dinner will wait for you, don't worry. My nephew is a little unbred, you will pardon him, madam. Gentlemen, will you walk ? Marwood ?

*Mrs. Mar.* I will follow, you, madam, ready.

*Fain.* Why, then, Foible is a woman of bad character, a foul downright bewd and procuress. And, I am, it seems a rank husband ; and my wife a very arrant, rank wife— all in the way of the world. 'Sdeath, I am nothing but a would be cuckold, a cuckold in the making. Surely I was born with budding horns like a young satyr, or I might have been born as an illegitimate child. 'Sdeath, to be outwitted, to be betrayed like this. If only I ran faster than my wife. But as it is, I will just crawl after her, with my horns like a snail to be overtaken by my wife—it is in a shabby wedlock I have been tied to.

*Mrs. Mar.* Then why don't you divorce her ; But first stop them furthering their scheme : the half of Millamant's fortune is too considerable to be parted with and that too to be given away to an enemy like Mirabell.

*Fain.* That property would have been mine, if you had not made that foolish disclsoure—the property would have been forfeited had they been married then. My wife in that case had brought sufficient money as a compensation for cuckoldom. I would not have then bothered to wear the horns gilded with gold.

*Mrs. Mar.* Your horns may still become a source of your fortune if you can only divorce your wife even now. She is no worse then the time when you had married her.

*Fain.* Hum, that may be—

*Mrs. Mar.* You married her to maintain you ; and if you can manage to have her keep, you better, than you expected. Why should you not keep her longer than you intended ?

*Fain.* But how should I do that ? By what means ?

*Mrs. Mar.* Disclose to your lady the conduct of your wife : threaten to divorce her—my lady loves her, and will come to any terms with you to save her reputation. Take the opportunity of disclosing it just at the time when your are going to reveal this fraud. My lady will then be enraged beyond any bounds, and sacrifice niece, and fortune, and in such a crisis. On my part I will keep her up to the game ; if I find her taking no interest in the matter I will not fail encourage her.

*Fain.* Faith, this appears to be a good scheme.

*Mrs. Mar.* I feel sorry that I gave a hint to my lady to try a match between Millamant and Sir Wilful, which may prove to be an obstacle in this matter.

*Fain.* Oh, for that matter, leave that to me to manage him ; I will.

disable him for that, he will drink like a Dane: after dinner, I'll set his hand in.

*Mrs. Mar.* Well, how do you stand affected towards your lady?

*Fain.* Why faith I'm thinking of it.—Let me see—I am married already; so that 's over. My wife has played the jade with me—well, that's over too—I never loved her, or if I had, why that would have been over too by this time. Jealous of her I cannot be, for I am certain: so there's an end of jealousy. Weary of her, I am and shall be—no, there 's no end of that: no, no, that were too much to hope. Thus far concerning my repose. Now for my reputation. As to my own, I married not for it: so that's out of the question, And as to my part in my wife's—why she had parted with hers before; so bringing none to me, she can take none from me; 'tis against all rule of play, that I should lose to one who has not wherewithal to stake.

*Mrs. Mar.* Besides, you forget, marriage is honourable.

*Fain.* Hum! Faith, and that's well thought on; marriage is honourable, as you say; and if so, wherefore should cuckoldom be a discredit, being derived from so honourable a root.

*Mrs. Mar.* Nay, I know not: if the root be honourable, why not the branches?

*Fain.* So, so, why this point's clear.—Well, how do we proceed?

*Mrs. Mar.* I will contrive a letter which shall be delivered to my lady at the time when that rascal who is to act Sir Rowland is with her. It shall come as from an unknown hand—for the less I appear to know of the truth, the better I can play the incendiary. Besides, I would not have Foible provoked if I could help it,—because you know she knows some passages—nay, I expect all will come out—but let the mine be sprung first, and then I care not if I am discovered.

*Fain.* If the worst come to the worst,—I 'll turn my wife to grass—I have already a deed of settlement of the best part of her estate; which I wheedled out of her; and that you shall partake at least.

*Mrs. Mar.* I hope you are convinced that I hate Mirabell now: you 'll be no more jealous?

*Fain.* Jealous, no,—by this kiss—let husbands be jealous; but let the lover still believe: or if he doubt, let it be only to endear his pleasure, and prepare the joy that follows, when he proves his mistress true. But let husbands' doubts convert to endless jealousy; or if they have belief, let it corrupt to superstition, and blind credulity.

disqualify him for that : I will let him drink like a Dane : after dinner I will engage him in the drinking.

*Mrs Mar.* Well, what is your attitude to your lady ?

*Fain.* Why, faith, I am thinking what it should be. Let me see—I am married already, so that is over. My wife has betrayed me— well, that is over too—I never loved her, or if I had, why that would have been over too by this time. I cannot be jealous of her, because I am not certain that I am not in iove with her ; so there is an end of jealousy. To talk of being weary of her, yes that I am and shall be. No, there is end of her ; no, no, it is too much to hope that I will ever get rid of that. Thus far as regards my peace of mind. Now about my reputation. As regards my own reputation, I did not marry to have it ; so that is out of the question. And as to my part in my wife's reputation—why she had no reputation to save when she married me.

*Mrs. Mar.* But, after all you forget one thing that marriage is honourable in itself

*Fain.* Hum ! Faith, that is well thought of ; marriage is honourable, as you say ; if so, why should cuckoldom be regarded as a discredit since it is derived from so honourable a root ?

*Mrs. Mar.* If the root is honourable, why not the branches ?

*Fain.* This point is clear. Well, how do we proceed ?

*Mrs. Mar.* I will manage to write a fake letter which shall be delivered to my lady at the time when that rascal who is to act Sir Rowland is with her. It shall come as if from an unknown hand—for if I pretend to know the least about the truth, the better I can play the part of blowing off their scheme. Moreover, I would like to see Foible provoked if I could help it,—because you know that she is sware of some of the important things. Well, I expect that everything will come out. But let the imposture be revealed first and then I do not mind if it is discovered that I am in it.

*Fain.* Let the worst come I will reduce my wife to destitution—I have already a deed of settlement of the best part of her estate, which I was able to get out of her by my ingenuity. And that you can share with me at least.

*Mrs. Mar.* I hope you are convinced that I hate Mirabell now : you will be no more jealous ?

*Fain.* Jealous, no,—by this kiss—let husbands be jealous . but let the lover believe that his mistress is faithful to him. And if he has any suspicion, let that be to add to the pleasure, and the joy that follows, when he proves his mistress to be faithful. But if husbands are suspicious of their wives, let the suspicion be turned into endless jealousies. Or if they have faith in their wife, let it degenerate into an irrational and facile belief.

I am single, and will herd no more with 'em. True, I wear the badge, but I'll disown the order. And since I take my leave of 'em, I care not if I leave 'em a common motto to their common crest.

> All husbands must, or pain, or shame, endure :
> The wise too jealous are, fools too secure.

*(Exeunt.*

I consider myself single now, and will no more associate myself with them. It is true that I still wear the badge of a husband, but I will refuse to be called a husband. And since I take leave of the herd of husbands, I care not if I leave them a common saying for the benefit of their common crest.

> All husbands must, or pain, or shame, endure ;
> The wit too jealous are, fools too secure.

[*Exeunt*

## ACT FOUR

*A room in Lady Wishfort's house*

*Lady Wishfort and Foible*

*Lady.* Is Sir Rowland coming, sayest thou, Foible? and are things in order?

*Foib.* Yes, madam. I have put wax-lights in the sconces; and placed the footmen in a row in the hall, in their best liveries, with the coachman and postillion to fill up the equipage.

*Lady.* Have you pulvilled the coachman and postillion, that they may not stink of the stable, when Sir Rowland comes by?

*Foib.* Yes, madam.

*Lady.* And are the dancers and the music ready, that he may be entertained in all points with correspondence to his passion?

*Foib.* All is ready, madam.

*Lady.* And—well—and how do I look, Foible?

*Foib.* Most killing well, madam.

*Lady.* Well, and how shall I receive him? In what figure shall I give his heart the first impression? There is a great deal in the first impression. Shall I sit?—No, I won't sit—I 'll walk—ay, I 'll walk from the door upon his entrance; and then turn full upon him.—No, that will be too sudden. I 'll lie—ay, I'll lie down—I'll receive him in my little dressing-room, there 's a couch—yes, yes, I'll give the first impression on a couch. I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow; with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way—yes—and then as soon as he appears, start, ay, start and be surprised, and rise to meet him in a pretty disorder. Yes, oh, nothing is more alluring than a levee from a couch in some confusion. It shows the foot to advantage, and furnishes with blushes, and recomposing airs beyond comparison. Hark! There's coach.

*Foib.* 'Tis he, madam.

*Lady.* Oh, dear, has my nephew made his addresses to Millamant? I ordered him.

*Foib.* Sir Wilful is set in to drinking, madam, in the parlour.

*Lady.* Ods my life. I 'll send him to her. Call her down, Foible: bring her hither. I'll send him as I go.—When they are together, then come to me, Foible, that I may not be too long alone with Sir Rowland.

(*Exit*

*Enter Mrs. Millamant and Mrs. Fainall*

## ACT FOUR

**SCENE :** *A room in Lady Wishfort's house*

*Lady Wishfort and Foible*

*Lady.* Is Sir Rowland coming, as you say, Foible ? and is everything in order in the house ?

*Foib.* Yes, madam. I have put wax-lights in the sconces (candlesticks) ; and asked the footmen to stand in a row in the hall, in their best uniforms, with the coachman and postillion to fill up the requirements.

*Lady.* Have you sprayed scent on the coachman and postillion so that they may not smell of the stable ?

*Foib.* Yes, madam.

*Lady.* And have you asked the dancers and musicians to be in readiness so that he may be entertained ?

*Foib.* All is ready, madam.

*Lady* And—well—how do I look, Foible.

*Foib.* Most killing well, madam.

*Lady* Well, and how shall I receive him ? In what position shall I give his heart the first impression ? A great deal depends on the first impression I may be able to make. Shall I show him in sitting position ?—No, I will not be sitting—I will be walking—yes, I will walk from the door as he enters the house ; and then I will turn full upon him—No, that will be too sudden, I will not do that. I will be in a lying position, yes I will lie down—I will receive him in my little dressing room. There is a couch there—yes, yes, I will give the first impression lying down on a couch. No, I will lounge about and lean upon one elbow with one foot a little dangling off, moving in a thoughtful way—yes, yes,—and then as soon as he appears, pretend to start, yes, start and be surprised, and will get up to meet him with my dress in disorder. Yes, oh, nothing is so alluring than the reception of a visitor on rising from bed in some confusion. It helps to show the foot in suggestive way, which causes blushes easily, and then the way the features of the face resumes their normal expression is beyond comparison. See, there is a coach coming.

*Foib.* It is he, madam.

*Lady.* Oh dear, has my nephew already made his addresses to Millamant ? I ordered him to do so.

*Foib.* Sir Wilful is busy in his drinking in the parlour, madam.

*Lady.* Ods my life, I will send him to her. Call her down, Foible, bring her here. I will send him as I go—when they are together, then come to me, Foible, so that I am not left too long alone with Sir Rowland. (*Exit.*

*Enter Mrs. Millamant and Mrs. Fainall*

*Foib.* Madam, I stayed here, to tell your ladyship that Mr. Mirabell has waited this half-hour for an opportunity to talk with you. Though my lady's orders were to leave you and Sir Wilful together. Shall I tell Mr. Mirabell that you are at leisure?

*Milla.* No—what would the dear man have? I am thoughtful, and would amuse myself. Bid him come another time.

(*Repeating and walking about*)

There never yet was woman made,
Nor shall, but to be cursed.
That's hard!

*Mrs. Fain.* You are very fond of Sir John Suckling today, Millamant, and the poets.

*Milla.* Ha? Ay, and filthy verses—so I am.

*Foib.* Sir Wilful is coming, madam. Shall I send Mr. Mirabell away?

*Milla.* Ay, if you please, Foible, send him away,—or send him hither,—just as you will, dear Foible.—I think I'll see him. Shall I? Ay, let the wretch come.

(*Exit Foible*

Thyrsis, a youth of the inspired train. (*Repeating*
Dear Fainall, entertain Sir Wilful. Thou hast philosophy to undergo a fool, thou art married and hast patience. I would confer with my own thoughts.

*Mrs. Fain.* I am obliged to you, that you would make me your proxy in this affair; but I have business of my own.

*Enter Sir Wilful*

*Mrs. Fain.* O Sir Wilful; you are come at the critical instant. There's your mistress up to the ears in love and contemplation, pursue your point, now or never.

*Sir Wil.* Yes; my aunt will have it so,—I would gladly have been encouraged with a bottle or two, because I'm somewhat wary at first, before I am acquainted;—(*This while Millamant walks about repeating to herself.*) But I hope, after a time, I shall break my mind—that is upon further acquaintance. So, for the present, cousin, I'll take my leave—if so be you'll be so kind to make my excuse, I'll return to my company.

*Mrs. Fain.* Oh, fie, Sir Wilful! What, you must not be daunted.

*Sir Wil.* Daunted, no, that's not it, is not so much for that—for if so be that I set on 't, I'll do 't. But only for the present, 'tis sufficient till further acquaintance, that's all your servant.

*Mrs. Fain.* Nay, I'll swear you shall never lose so favourable an opportunity, if I can help it. I'll leave you together, and lock the door. [*Exit.*

*Sir Wil.* Nay, nay, cousin—I have forgot my gloves.—What d' ye

*Foib.* Madam, I am waiting here to tell your ladyship that Mr. Mirabell has waited this half-hour to talk with you. Of course, my lady's orders are to leave you and Sir Wilful together. Shall I tell Mr Mirabell that you are now at leisure to talk to him ?

*Milla.* No. I am now in a thoughtful mood. Tell him to come another time.

(*Repeating the poem and walking about.*)

*Mrs. Fain.* You are very fond of Sir John Suckling to-day.

*Milla.* He ? Yes, and filthy verses—so I am.

*Foib.* Sir Wilful is coming, madam. Shall I send Mr. Mirabell away ?

*Milla.* Yes, if you please, Foible, send him away,— you may rather send him here,—just as you wish, dear Foible.—I think I will see him. Shall I see him ? Yes, I will, let the wretch come. (*Exit Foible.*)

Dear Fainall, please entertain Sir Wilful. You know the art of suffering a fool, as you are already married and have much patience. I will rather be busy with my own thoughts.

*Mrs. Fain.* I am obliged to you for engaging me as your substitute in this affair. But I am sorry to tell you that I have some work of my own now.

*Enter Sir Wilful*

*Mrs. Fain.* O Sir Wilful, you have come just in time. There you find your mistress over head and ears in love and in thoughful mood. This is just the time for you to propose your love to her; or you may not get a better chance.

*Mir Wil.* Yes my aunt wants me to do likewise,—I would have been happy if I were encouraged to proceed with my love affair with a bottle of wine or two, because I am somewhat shy at first as I am not acquainted with the lady already—(This while Millamant walks about repeating to herself.) But I hope after some time I shall be able to declare love to her easily—that is upon further acuaintance with her. So for the present, cousin, I will take my leave.

*Mrs. Fain.* Oh, shame, Sir Wilful ! You must not be afraid.

*Sir Wil.* Afraid ? No, that's not the matter, it is not so much for that—for if it is that then once I set my mind on it, I will definitely do it. Bur as for the present, I will rather not approach in the matter. This much is sufficient for the moment till I am further acquainted with the lady, that's all—your servant.

*Mrs Fain.* Well. I will swear you will never get so favourable an opportunity. I will lock you together. (*Exit.*)

*Sir Wil.* No, no, cousin—I have forgotten my gloves outside—

do? 'Sheart, a' has locked the door indeed. I think. Nay, Cousin Fainall, open the door—Pshaw, what a vixen trick is this? Nay, now a' has seen me too. Cousin, I made bold to pass through as it were. I think this door's enchanted—

*Milla.* [*Repeating.*]

I prithee spare me, gentle boy.
Press me no more for that slight toy.

*Sir Wil.* Anan? Cousin, your servant.

*Milla.* That foolish trifle of a heart. Sir Wilful!

*Sir Wil.* Yes—your servant. No offence, I hope, cousin.

*Milla.* [*Repeating.*]

I swear it will not do its part,
Though thou does thine, employ'st thy power and art.

Natural, easy Suckling.

*Sir Wil.* Anan? Suckling? No such suckling neither, cousin, nor stripling: I thank Heaven, I 'm no minor.

*Milla.* Ah, rustic, ruder than Gothic.

*Sir Wil.* Well, well, I shall understand your lingo one of these days, cousin, in the meanwhile I must answer in plain English.

*Milla.* Have you any business with me, Sir Wilful?

*Sir Wil.* Not at present, cousin.—Yes, I made bold to see, to come and know if that how you were disposed to fetch a walk this evening, if so be that I might not be troublesome, I would have sought a walk with you.

*Milla.* A walk? What then?

*Sir Wil.* Nay, nothing—only for the walk's sake, that 's all.—

*Milla.* I nauseate walking; 'tis a country diversion, I loathe the country and everything that relates to it.

*Sir Wil.* Indeed! Hah! Look ye, look ye, you do? Nay, 'tis like you may. Here are choice of pastimes here in town, as plays and the like, that must be confessed indeed—

*Milla.* *Ah, l'etourdi*! I hate the town too.

*Sir Wil* Dear heart, that 's much—Ha! that you should hate 'em both! Ha 'tis like you may; there are some can't relish the town, and others can 't away with the country,—'tis like you may be one of those, cousin.

*Milla.* Ha, ha, ha! Yes, 'tis like I may.—You have nothing further to say to me?

*Sir Wil.* Not at present, cousin.—'Tis like when I have an opportunity to be more private, I may break my mind in some measure—I conjecture you partly guess—However, that 's as time shall try,—but spare to speak and spare to speed, as they say.

*Milla.* If it is of no great importance, Sir Wilful, you will oblige me to leave me: I have just now a little business—

What are you doing ? Cousin Fainall, please open the door—pshaw what kind of a trick of a cunning woman is this ? Cousin, I was bold enough to look straight at her too, it seems. I think this is enchanted—

*Milla.* (*Repeating the poem.*)

*Sir Wil.* I beg your pardon ? Cousin, your servant.

*Milla.* Sir Wilful !

*Sir Wil* Yes,—your servant. No offence, I hope, cousin.

*Milla.* (*Repeating the poem.*)

*Sir Wil.* I beg your pardon ! Suckling ? I am neither a suckling, cousin, nor a stripling : I thank heaven, I am no minor.

*Milla.* Ah, rustic, ruder than Gothic.

*Sir Wil* Well, I will, I shall understand your peculiar language of the city one of these days, cousin. In the meanwhile I must answer in the plain English.

*Milla.* Have you any business with me, Sir Wilful ?

*Sir Wil* Not at present, cousin.—Yes, I was bold enough to seek to come and know how you were disposed to take a walk this evening. If I am not troublesome to you, I would have liked to take a walk with you.

*Milla.* A walk ? What then ?

*Sir Wil.* No, nothing—only for the sake of the walk, that is all—

*Milla.* I hate walking ; it is pleasure practised by the country people. I hate the country and everything connected with it.

*Sir Wil.* Indeed ! Hah ! Look you, look you, you do ? Well, it is likely that you may. Here you have choice of passtimes in the town, as plays and the like, and you must agree that you can do without walk on account of that reason.

*Milla.* Ah, that is not to the point. I hate the town too.

*Sir Wil.* Dear heart, that is to much—Ha ! it is strange that you should hate both the country and the town. There are some who do not like the town, and others who do not like the country—it is likely that you may belong to one of these groups, cousin.

*Milla.* Ha, ha, ha! It is likely that I may—You have anything further to say to me ?

*Sir Wil* Not at present, cousin. -It is likely that I may tell you something more when I have an opportunity to be more private with you. I may then tell you how I love you in my heart—I am sure you can partly guess—however, let us talk about that in time. But one should not speak or act hastily as they say.

*Milla.* If it is of no great importance, Sir Wilful, you will please oblige me to leave me ; I have just now a little business—

*Sir Wil.* Enough, enough, cousin: yes, all a case—When you 're disposed, when you 're disposed. Now 's as well as another time; and another time as well as now. All 's one for that.—Yes, yes, if your concerns call you, there's no haste; it will keep cold as they say.—Cousin, your servant.—I think this door 's locked.

*Milla.* You may go this way, sir.

*Sir Wil.* Your servant, then with your leave I 'll return to my company. [*Exit*

*Milla.* Ay, ay; ha, ha, ha?
Like phoebus sung the no less am'rous boy.

*Enter Mirabell*

*Mira.* Like Daphne she, as lovely and as coy.
Do you lock yourself up from me, to make my search more curious? Or is this pretty artifice contrived, to signify that here the chase must end, and my pursuit be crowned, for you can fly no further.

*Milla.* Vanity! No—I'll fly and be followed to the last moment, though I am upon the very verge of matrimony, I expect you should solicit me as much as if I were wavering at the gate of a monastery, with one foot over the threshold. I 'll be solicited to the very last, nay and afterwards.

*Mira.* What, after the last?

*Milla.* Oh, I should think I was poor and had nothing to bestow, if I were reduced to an inglorious ease, and freed from the agreeable fatigues of solicitation.

*Mira.* But do not you know, that when favours are conferred upon instant and tedious solicitation, that they diminish in their value, and that both the giver loses the grace, and the receiver lessens his pleasure?

*Milla.* It may be in things of common application; but never sure in love. Oh, I hate a lover that can dare to think he draws a moment's air, independent of the bounty of his mistress. There is not so impudent a thing in nature as the saucy look of an assured man, confident of success. The pedantic arrogance of a very husband has not so pragmatical an air. Ah! I 'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure.

*Mira.* Would you have 'm both before marriage? Or will you be contented with the first now, and stay for the other till after grace?

*Milla.* Ah, don't be impertinent. My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu? Ay, adieu—my morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs, ye sommeils du matin*, adieu—I can't do 't, 'tis more than impossible.—Positively, Mirabell, I 'll lie abed in a morning as long as I please.

*Sir Wil.* Alright, alright, cousin, when you are disposed we may talk about it. Yes, yes, if your business calls you, there is no haste now. I think this door is locked.

*Milla.* You may go this way, Sir.

*Sir Wil.* I will return to my company. (*Exit.*)

*Milla.* Yes, yes ; ha, ha, ha, !

*Enter Mirabell*

*Mira.* Like Daphne she, as lovely and as coy.
Do you lock yourself from me to make my search more eager? Or have you found out this stratagem to signify that here my chase must end, and my object of pursuit be attained, since you cannot run away any further?

*Milla.* Vanity ! No—I would like to be followed up to the last moment, though it is true that I am now upon the verge of a matrimonial alliance. Therefore I expect that you should court me in such a way as if I were hesitating whether to become a nun or not, even at the last when I am ready to marry you. I would like to be courted to the very last, nay, even afterwards.

*Mira.* What, even after the last ?

*Milla.* Oh, I should think that because I was poor I were reconciled to the state of wedding and relieved of the tedium of being wooed by you.

*Mira.* But do you not know that when favour is bestowed soon after persistent wooing it is less esteemed, and the giver has less attractiveness and the receiver less pleasure ?

*Milla.* It may be applicable in the common things of everyday life, but surely never in matters of love. Oh I hate a lover that can dare to think that he can live even for a moment without the favour of his mistress. There is nothing so impudent a thing in the world than the sauby look of a man who is sure of the right to the love from his mistress, and therefore confident of success. A husband may have the air of self assurance, but it is not so conceited as the self-confidence of a lover. Ah, I will never marry unless I am assured of my freedom of will and pleasure.

*Mira.* Would you have then both before your marriage ? Or will you be happy with the first now, and wait for the other till after marriage ?

*Milla.* Ah, don't be impertinent ? My dear liberty, shall I sacrifice you ? My faithful solitude, my darling thought, must I bid you farewell then ? Yes, farewell—my morning thoughts, pleasant wakings, carefree sleeps, all you *douceurs* (sweet things), you *sommeils du-matin* (morning sleep), farewell ? Can't do this, it is more than impossible.—Definitely Mirabell, I will lie in my bed in the morning as long as I please.

*Mira.* Then I 'll get up in a morning as early as I please.

*Milla* Ah! Idle creature, get up when you will. And, d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married; positively I won't be called names.

*Mira.* Names!

*Milla.* Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar, I shall never bear that.—God Mirabell, don't let us be familiar of or fond, not kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis: nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to provoke eyes and whispers; and then, never be seen there together again: as if we were proud of one another the first week and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together, but let us be very strange and well bred: let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while; and as well bred as if we were not married at all.

*Mira.* Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto your demands are pretty reasonable.

*Milla.* Trifles—as liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please: to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please; and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste: to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance: or to be intimate with fools because they may be your relations. Come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my teatable, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a wife.

*Mira.* Your bill of fare is something advanced in this latter account. Well, have I liberty to offer conditions,—that when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

*Milla.* You have free leave, propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

*Mira.* I thank you. *Imprimis* then, I covenant that your acquaintance be general that you admit no sworn confidante, intimate of your own sex: no she friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy. No decoy-duck to wheedle you a fop, scrambling to the play in a mask, then bring you home in a pretended fright, wher

*Mira.* Then I will get up as early as I please.

*Milla.* Ah, idle creature, get up when you wish. I don't like to be called by pet names after I am married.

*Mira.* Names!

*Milla.* Yes, names like wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart and the rest of that hateful hypocritical language, by which men and their wives are so disgustingly known to each other—I can never stand that. Good Mirabell, don't let us pretend to be fond or familiar like others do: kiss before people—like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis: nor let us go to Hyde Park the first Sunday in a new chariot, to attract the eyes of people and make them whisper, and later never to be seen there together again as if we were proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, not go to any play together, but let us be very strange and well bred; let us be as strange as if we had been married for quite a long time and as well bred as if we were not married at all.

*Mira.* Have you any more conditions to offer? So far your demands have been very reasonable.

*Milla.* Yes, I have a few more demands of a—trifle nature—I must have the liberty to pay and receive visits from anyone I please: to write and receive letters, without any questions or faces on your part; to wear what I please; and choose to talk only with those of my own taste; to have no obligations bound upon me to converse with wits that I don't like because they are your aquaintance; or to be intimate with fools because they may happen to be your relations. I come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I am out of humour, without giving any explanation. I will have my private room undisturbed, and I must be the sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking permission. And lastly, whenever I am within, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. If these conditions are agreed to, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may gradually consent to become your wife.

*Mira.* Have I also liberty to offer conditions?

*Milla.* You have a blank permission. Propose whatever you want, speak freely and spare nothing.

*Mira.* I thank you. In the first place then, I demand that your acquaintance be general; that you will admit no one trusted personally with private affairs, often love No woman employed to allure others into a snare to persuade you by flattery to entertain a fop, going hastily to the play in a mask, then bring you home in a pretended fright, when.

you think you shall be found out—and rail at me for missing the play, and disappoining the frolic which you had to pick me up and prove my con:tancy.

*Milla.* Detestable *imprimis* ! I go to the play in a mask !

*Mira.* *Item*, I article that you continue to like your own face as long as I shall : and while it passes current with me, that you endeavour not to new coin it. To which end, together with all vizards for the day, I prohibit all masks for the night, made of oiled-skins and I know not what-hog's bones, hare's gall, pig water, and the marrow of a roasted cat. In short, I forbid all commerce with the gentlewoman in what-d'ye-call it Court. *Item*, I shut my doors against all bawds with baskets, and pennyworths of muslin china, fans, atlases, etc.—*Item*, when you shall be breeding —

*Milla.* Ah ! Name it not.

*Mira.* Which may be presumed, with a blessing on our endeavours—

*Milla.* Odious endeavours !

*Mira.* I denounce against all strait lacing, squeezing for a shape, till you mould my boy' head like a sugar-loaf: and instead of a man-child, make me father to a crooked billet. Lastly, to the dominion of the tea-table I submit.—But with proviso, that you exceed not in your province ; but restrain yourself to native and simple tea-table drinks, as tea, chocolate, and coffee. As likewise to genuine and authorized tea-table talk—such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends and so forth—but that on no account you eneroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows ; for prevention of which I banish all foreign forces, all auxiliaries to the tea-table, as orange-brandy, all aniseed, cinnamon, citron and Barbadoes-waters, together with ratafia and the most noble spirit of clary. But for cowslipwine, poppy-water, and all dormitives, those I allow. These provisoes admitted in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

*Milla.* Oh, horrid provisoes ! filthy strong waters ! I toast fellows, odious men ! I hate your odious provisoes.

*Mira.* Then we're agreed. Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract ? and here comes one to be a witness to the sealing of the deed.

*Enter Mrs. Fainall.*

*Milla.* Fainall, what shall I do ? Shall I have him ? I think I must have him.

*Mrs. Fain* Ay, ay, take him, take him, what should you do ?

*Milla.* Well then, I'll take my death I'm in a horrid fright—

you think you shall be found out and abuse me for missing the play, and spoiling the fun.

*Milla.* A very detestable first conditions these are! Do I go to the play in a mask.

*Mira.* *Item*, it should be agreed that you continue to like your own face as long as I shall: and while it is acceptable to me, you do not try to make up with paint and rouge your face. To which end, you will have no kind of mask either in the day time, or at night—any kind of make up is prohibited by me, things made of oiled skins and I know not what—hog's bones, hare's gall, pig water, and the marrow of a roasted eat. In short I forbid all your intercourse with the gentlewomen in what-do-you-call-it Court. *Item*, I shut my doors against all nasty women with baskets, and pennyworths of muslin, china, fans, muslins, etc,—*Item*, when you are pregnant—

*Milla.* Ah, don't mention it.

*Mira.* Which is possible with a blessing on our endeavours—

*Milla.* Odious endeavours!

*Mira.* I prohibit the use of corset in order to maintain a graceful shape till you deform the head of my child in the womb; and thereby instead of a man-child make me a father to a crooked stick of wood rounded at the top. Lastly, to the dominion of the tea-table I submit.—But with condition, that you do not go beyond your simple tea-table drinks; you must restrict yourself within the simple and native tea-table drinks, as tea, chocolate, and coffee. As regards to genuine and permissible tea-table talk—such as change of fashions, spoiling reputations, back-biting, and so forth—but on no account can you encroach upon the exclusive privilege of men, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows; to stop this kind of thing, I will banish all alcoholic drinks, and other things that are now a days included on the tea-table, such as orange-brandy, liquor flavoured with orange peel and lemon, cinnamon, citron and Barbados waters, together with ratafia and the most noble spirit of clary. But for cowslip-wine, poppy water, and other sleep producing substances, I will have no objection. If these conditions are accepted, in other things I may prove a complying husband easy to handle.

*Milla.* Oh, these are horrid conditions! filthy, strong-waters!

*Mira.* Then we are agreed. Shall I kiss your hand upon this agreement? and here comes one to be the witness.

*Enter Mrs. Fainall*

*Milla.* Fainall, what shall I do? Shall I have him? I think I must have him.

*Mrs. Fain.* Yes, yes, take him. What else should you do?

*Milla.* Well then, I am sure I am in a horrid fright.

Fainall, I shall never say it—well, I think I'll endure you.

*Mrs. Fain* Fie, fie, have him, and tell him so in plain terms: for I am sure you have a mind to him.

*Milla.* Are you? I think I have—and the horrid man looks as if he thought so too. Well, you ridiculous thing, you, I'll have you.—I won't be kissed, nor I won't bo thanked.—Here, kiss my hand though: so, hold your tongue now, don't say a word.

*Mrs. Fain* Mirabell, there's a necessity for your obedience; you have neither time to talk norstay. My mother is coming; and in my conscience, if she should see you, would fall into fits, and maybe not recover in time enough to return to Sir Rowland; who, as Foible tells me, is in a fair way to succeed. Therefore spare your ecstasies for another occasion, and slip down the back stairs, where Foible waits to consult you.

*Milla.* Ay, go, go. In the meantime I suppose you have said something to please me.

*Mira.* I am all obedience. [*Exit*

*Mrs. Fain.* Yonder Sir Wilful's drunk: and so noisy that my mother has been forced to leave Sir Rowland to appease him; but he answers her only with singing and drinking. What they may have done by this time I know not; but Petulant and he were upon quarrelling as I came by.

*Milla.* Well, if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am a lost thing;—for I find I love him violently.

*Mrs. Fain.* So it seems: for you mind not what's said to you.—If you doubt him, you had best take up with Sir Wilful.

*Milla.* How can you name that superannuated lubber? Foh!

*Enter Witwoud, from drinking*

*Mrs. Fain.* So is the fray made up, that you have left 'em?

*Wit.* Left 'em? I could stay no longer—I have laughed like ten christenings.—I am tipsy with laughing.—If I had stayed any longer I should have burst,—I must have been let out and pieced in the sides like an unsized camlet. Yes, yes, the fray is composed: my lady came in like a *nolle prosequi*, and stopped the proceedings.

*Milla.* What was the dispute?

*Wit.* That's the jest; there was no dispute. They could neither of 'em speak for rage; and so fell a sputtering at one another like two roasting apples.

*Enter Petulant, drunk*

*Wit.* Now, Petulant. all's over, all's well? Gad, my head begins to whim it about. Why dost thou not speak? thou art both as drunk and as mute as a fish.

Fainall, I shall never say it—Well, I will endure you.

*Mrs. Fain* Shame, shame, have him, have him, and tell him so.

*Milla.* Are you sure of that ? I think I like him—look how the horrid man looks as if he thought so too. Well, you ridiculous thing, you, I will have you. I don't want to be kissed, nor do I want to be thanked. Here, of course you can kiss my hand : so hold your tongue now, don't say a word.

*Mrs. Fain.* Mirabell, it is necessary that you should be obedient ; you have neither time to talk nor to stay. My mother is coming ; and I have a feeling that in case she sees you, she would fall into fits, and may not recover in time to return to Sir Rowland, who, as Foible tells me, is in a fair way to succeed. So spare your passionate raptures for some other occasion, and ship down the back stairs, where Foible waits to take instruction from you.

*Milla.* Yes, go, go.

*Mira.* I am all obedience. [*Exit.*

*Mrs. Fain.* There Sir Wilful is drunk ; and he is so noisy that my mother has been forced to leave Sir Rowland to make him peaceful : but he answers her only with singing and drinking I do not know what they have done by this time ; but Petulant and he were about to quarrel when I was coming.

*Milla.* Well, if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am a lost thing ; for I find I love him violently.

*Mrs. Fain.* So it seems ; because you are not listening to what I am telling you.—If you have any doub about him, you would better accept Sir Wilful.

*Milla.* How could you mention to me that aged, infirm feeble minded body of man ? foh !

*Enter Witwoud, from drinking*

*Mrs. Fain* So, is the quarrel made up, that you have left them ?

*Wit.* Left them ? I could stay no longer—I have laughed as I would at giving nicknames ten times over. I am intoxicated with laughing—if I had stayed any longer I would have burst. I must have been expanded and enlarged in the sides like an ill-fitting cloak. My lady came in like one in the court unwilling to prosecute, and stopped the proceeding.

*Milla.* What was the dispute ?

*Wit.* That is the joke of the whole thing ; there was no dispute. They could neither of them speak as they were so angry ; so they started hastily and indistinctly with one another.

*Enter Petulant drunk*

*Wit.* Is all over, and all well ? Gad, my head seems to turn round and round. Why don't you speak ? You are both as drunk and as mute as a fish.

*Pet.* Look you, Mrs. Millamant—if you can love me, dear nymph—say it—and that's the conclusion : pass on, or pass off, that's all.

*Wit.* Thou hast uttered volumes, folios, in less than *decimo sexto*, my dear Lacedaemonian. Sirrah, Petulant, thou art an epitomizer of words.

*Pet.* Witwoud—you are an annihilator of sense.

*Wit.* Thou art a retailer of phrase : and dost deal in remnants of remnants, like a maker of pincushions—thou art in truth (metaphorically speaking) a speaker of shorthand.

*Pet.* Thou art (without a figure) just one half of an ass, and Baldwin yonder, thy half-brother, is the rest—a Gemini of asses split would make just four of you.

*Wit.* Thou dost bite, my dear mustard-seed ; kiss me for that.

*Pet.* Stand off—I'll kiss no more males,—I have kissed your twin yonder in a humour or reconciliation, till he (*hiccup*) rises upon my stomach like a radish.

*Milla.* Eh ! filthy creature—what was the quarrel ?

*Pet.* There was no quarrel—there might have been a quarrel.

*Wit.* If there had been words enow between 'em to have expressed provocation, they had gone together by the ears like a pair of castanets.

*Pet.* You were the quarrel.

*Milla.* Me !

*Pet.* If I have a humour to quarrel, I can make less matters conclude premises.—If you are not handsome, what than ; if I have a humour to prove it ?—If I shall have my reward, say so ; if not, fight for your face the next time yourself—I'll go sleep.

*Wit.* Do, wrap thyself up like a woodlouse, and dream revenge.—And hear me, if thou canst learn to write by to-morrow morning, pen me a challenge—I'll carry it for thee.

*Pet.* Carry your mistress's monkey a spider. Go flea dogs, and read romances—I'll go to bed to my maid. [*Exit*

*Mrs. Fain.* He's horridly drunk—how came you all in this pickle ?

*Wit.* A plot, a plot, to get rid of the knight,—your husband's advice ; but he sneaked off.

*Enter Sir Wilful, drunk, and Lady Wishfort*

*Lady.* Out upon't, out upon't, at years of discretion, and comport yourself at this rantipole rate.

*Sir Wil.* No offence, aunt.

*Lady.* Offence ? As I'm a person, I'm ashamed of you—Foh ! how you stink of wine ! D' ye think my niece will ever endure such a Borachio ! you 're an absolute Borachio.

*Sir Wil.* Borachio !

*Pet.* Look you, Mrs. Millamant—if you can love me, dear nymph—say it—and that takes us to the conclusion: yes, or no, that's all I want to know.

*Wit.* You have uttered volumes, folios, in less than *decimo sexto* (small sized book) my dear Lacedaemonian.

*Pet.* Witwoud, you are an annihilator (destroyer) of sense.

*Wit.* You are retailer of phrases; and do you deal in remnants, like a maker of pincushions—you are in truth (metaphorically speaking) a speaker of shorthand.

*Pet.* You are (without a figure) just one half of an ass, and that Baldwin, your half-brother, is the rest.

*Wit.* Your wit is becoming pungent, my dear mustard-seed.

*Pet.* Stand off—I will kiss no more males,—I have kissed your twin (Sir Wilful) there in a humour of reconciliation, till he (*hiccup*) rises from my stomach like a radish.

*Milla* Eh! filthy creature—what was the quarrel?

*Pet.* There was no quarrel—there might have been a quarrel.

*Wit.* If there had been words enough between them to have provoked one another, they would have gone together by the ears like a pair of castanets.

*Pet.* You were the reason of the quarrel.

*Milla.* Me?

*Pet.* When I am in a humour to quarrel, I can pick up a quarrel even if I have no matter—If you are not handsome, what then; I was in my humour to prove that you are handsome. For this if you want to reward me, say so: if not, fight yourself to prove that you are handsome when the occasion comes next time.

*Wit.* Do wrap yourself like a woodlouse (an insect), and dream of revenge—and hear me, if you can learn to write by tomorrow morning, write for me a challenge note—I will carry it for you.

*Pet.* You may think of doing whatever you like, I don't care. Go, pick out fleas from your dog or read romances—I will go to bed to my maid. [*Exit.*

*Mrs. Fain.* He is horribly drunk—how did you get involved in this sad plight?

*Wit.* A plot, a plot, to get rid of the knight. It was done at your husband's advice: but he himself sneaked off.

*Enter Sir Wilful, drunk, and Lady Wishfort*

*Lady.* Shame, shame! this at your mature age! how you behave so wildly and recklessly.

*Sir Wit.* No offence, aunt.

*Lady.* Offence? As I am a person, I am ashamed of you—Foh! how horridly you smell of wine! Do you think my niece will ever endure such a drunken fellow like you? You are absolutely a drunken fellow.

*Sir Wit.* A drunken fellow?

*Lady.* At a time when you should commence an amour, and put your best foot foremost—

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, an you grudge me your liquor, make a bill.— Give me more drink, and take my purse. [*Sings*]

Prithee fill me the glass
Till it laugh in my face,
With ale that is potent and mellow :
He that whines for a lass
Is an ignorant ass,
For a *bumper* has not its fellow.

But if you would have me marry my cousin, say the word, and I'll do't—Wilful will do't, that's the word—Wilful will do't, that's my crest—my motto I have forgot

*Lady.* My nephew's a little overtaken, cousin—but 'tis with drinking your health. O' my word you are obliged to him—

*Sir Wil.* *In vino veritas*, aunt. If I drunk your health today, cousin, I am a Borachio. But if you have a mind to be married, say the word, and send for the piper, Wilful will do't. If not, dust it away, and let 't have 't other round—Tony, Odds heart, where 's Tony ? Tony 's an honest fellow, but he spits after a bumper, and that 's a fault. [*Sings*]

We'll drink and we'll never have done, boys,
Put the glass then around with the sun, boys,
Let Apollo's example invite us :
For he's drunk every night,
And that makes him so bright,
That he's able next morning to light us.

The sun 's a good pimple, an honest soaker, he has a cellar at your Antipodes. If I travel, aunt, I touch at your Antipodes—your Antipodes are a good rascally sort of topsy-turvy fellows—if I had a bumper I'd stand upon my head and drink a health to 'em.—A match or no match, cousin, with the hard name Aunt, Wilful will do 't. If she has her maidenhead let her look to 't ; if she has not, let her keep her own counsel in the meantime, and cry out at the nine months' end.

*Milla.* Your pardon, madam, I can stay no longer. Sir Wilful grows very powerful. Ugh ! how he smells ! I shall be overcome if I stay. Come, cousin.

[*Exeunt Millamant and Mrs. Fainall*

*Lady.* Smells ! he would poison a tallow-chandler and his family. Beastly creature, I know not what to do with him. Travel, quotha ! ay, travel, get thee gone : get thee but far enough, to the Saracens, or the Tartars,

*Lady.* At a time when you should be engaged in love affair, and show yourself at your best—

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, if you are so angry that I have taken your liquor, make a bill for it—but give me more drink, and take my purse. [*Sings.*

Prithee fill me the glass
Till it laugh in my face,
With ale that is potent and mellow :
He that whines for a lass
Is an ignorant ass,
For a *bumper* has not its fellow.

But if you want me to marry my cousin, say the word, and I will do it. Wilful will do it, that is the word. Wilful will do it, that is my crest—I have forgotten my motto.

*Lady.* My nephew is a little overcome by drinks. cousin—but it started with drinking your health. On my word you are obliged to him—

*Sir Wil.* Truth comes out in wine, aunt. If I drunk your health to-day, cousin, I am a drunken fellow, I admit. But if you have a mind to be married, say the word, and send for the player of music ; Wilful will do it. If not, leave it, and let's have another round—Tony, 'odsheart, where is Tony ? Tony is an honest fellow, but he spits after a full glass of wine, and that is a fault. [*Sings.*

The sun is a boon companion, an honest boozer ; he has a cellar at your Antipodes. If I travel, aunt, I touch at your Antipodes—your Antipodes are a good rascally kind of topsy turvy fellows—if I had a full glass of wine I would stand upon my head and drink a health to them. I would not bother whether this helps me to make a good match, cousin wit the lady whose name is difficult for me to remember. Aunt, Wilful will do it (that is Wilful will marry her). If she has still her maidenhood, let her look foward to the occasion ; If she has already lost her maidenhood, then let her keep her own counsel and cry out at the pain of delivery at the end of the nine months.

*Milla.* I beg your pardon, madam ; I cannot stand this any longer. Sir Wilful is more and more vulgar. Ugh ! how he smells ! I shall be sick if I stay on here. Come, cousin.

*Exeunt Millamant and Mrs. Fainall.*

*Lady.* Exactly. He smells so horribly that it would even poison the whole family of a dealer in animal fat. He is such beastly creature. I do not know what to do with him. He should go on a travel, he says : yes, yes. go on your travel, get you gone from here ; and you should try to go far enough, to the Saracens or the Tartars, or the Turks.

or the Turks—for thou art not fit to live in a Christian commonwealth, thou beastly pagan.

*Sir Wil.* Turks, no; no Turks, aunt: your Turks are infidels, and believe not in the grape. Your Mahometan, your Mu sulman is a dry stinkard—no offence, aunt. My map says that your Turk is not so honest a man as your Christian—I cannot find by the map that your mufti is orthodox—whereby it is a plain case, that orthodox is a hard word, aunt, and (*hiccup*) Greek for claret.

[*Sings*]

To drink is a Christian diversion
Unknown to the Turk or the Persian:
Let Mahometan fools
Live by heathenish rules,
And be damned over tea-cups and coffee.
But let British lads sing,
Crown a health to the king,
And a fig for your Sultan and Sophy.

Ah, Tony!

*Enter Foible, and whispers to Lady Wishfort*

*Lady.* Sir Rowland impatient? Good lack! what shall I do with this beastly tumbrill?—Go lie down and sleep, you sot—or as I'm a person, I'll have you bastinadoed with broomsticks. Call up the wenches with broomsticks.

*Sir Wil.* Aha? Wenches, where are the wenches?

*Lady.* Dear Cousin Witwoud, get him away, and you will bind me to you inviolably. I have an affair of moment that invades me with some precipitation. You will oblige me to all futurity.

*Wit.* Come, knight—pox on him, I don't know what to say to him—will you go to a cock match?

*Sir Wil.* With a wench, Tony? Is she a shake-bag, Sirrah? Let me bite your cheek for that.

*Wit.* Horrible! He has a breath like a bagpipe. Ay, ay, come, you march, my Salopian?

*Sir Wil.* Lead on, little Tony—I'll follow thee my Anthony, my Tantony. . Sirrah, thou shalt be my Tantony, and I'll be thy pig.

—And a fig for your Sultan and Sophy.

[*Exit, singing, with Witwoud.*

*Lady.* This will never do. It will never make a match—at least before he has been abroad.

*Enter Waitwell, disguised as Sir Rowland*

*Lady.* Dear Sir Rowland, I am confounded with confusion at the retrospection of my own rudeness, I have more pardons to ask than the Pope distributes in the year of jubi-

because you are not fit to live in a Christian commonwealth—yon are such a beastly pagan.

*Sir Wil.* Turks, no; no Turks, aunt: your Turks are infidels, and they do not believe in the grape (product, that is, wine). Your Mohammedan, your Mussalman, is a dry stinking person—no offence, aunt. My map says that your Turk is not so honest a man as your Christian —I cannot find by the map that your Mohammedan priest is an *orthodox*—where as it is quite clear that orthodox is a hard word, aunt, and (*hiccup*) as unintelligible word for claret. [*Sings.*

To drink is a Christian diversion
Unknown to the Turk or the Persion:
Let Mohametan fools
Live by heathenish rules,
And be damned over tea-cups and coffee.
But let British lads sing,
Crown a health to the king,
And a fig for your Sultan and Sophy.

*Enter Foible, and whispers to Lady Wishfort*

*Lady.* Sir Rowland impatient? Good lack! what shall I do with this dirty drunken fellow? Go, lie down and sleep, you drunkard—or as I am a person, I will have you beaten with broomsticks. Call up the women with broomsticks.

*Sir Wil.* Aha? women, where are women?

*Lady.* Dear cousin Witwoud, take him away, and I will be really very obliged to you for this service. I have an important business that demands my attention with urgency. You will oblige me ever by doing this favour.

*Wit.* Come, knight—pox on him, I don't know what to say to him—will you go to see a cock fight?

*Sir Wil.* With a wench, Tony? Is she a fighting cock, sir? Let me kiss your cheek for that.

*Wit.* Horrible! He has a breath like a bagpipe. Yes, yes, come. Will you march, my Salopian?

*Sir Wil.* Lead on, little Tony—I will follow you; my Antony, my Antony, my Tatony. Sir, you shall be my Tatony, and I will be your pig.

(*Exit singing, with Witwoud.*

*Lady.* This will never do. I can never agree to a match between him and Millamant—at least before he had been abroad.

*Enter Waitwell, disguised as for Sir Rowland*

*Lady.* Dear Sir Rowland, I am confounded with confusion at the thought of my rudeness to you. I have more pardons to ask than the Pope distributes in the year of jubilee.

lee. But I hope where there is likely to be so near an alliance, we may unbend the severity of decorum, and dispense with a little ceremony.

*Wait.* My impatience, madam, is the effect of my transport, and till I have the possession of your adorable person, I am tantalized on the rack ; and do but hang, madam, on the tenter of expectation.

*Lady,* You have excess of gallantry, Sir Rowland ; and press things to a conclusion, with a most prevailing vehemence.—But a day or two for decency of marriage—

*Wait.* For decency of funeral, madam. The delay will break my heart—or if that should fail, I shall be poisoned. My nephew will get an inkling of my designs, and poison me, and I would willingly starve him before I die. I would gladly go out of the world with that satisfaction. That would be some comfort to me, if I could but live so long as to be revenged on that unnatural viper.

*Lady.* Is he so unnatural, say you ? Truly I would contribute much both to the saving of your life, and the accomplishment of revenge.—Not that I respect myself; though he has been a perfidious wretch to me.

*Wait.* Perfidious to you !

*Lady.* O Sir Rowland, the hours that he has died away at my feet, the tears that he has shed, the oaths that he has sworn, the palpitations that he has felt, the trances and the tremblings, the ardours and the ecstasies, the kneelings and the risings, the heart-heavings and the hand-grippings, the pangs and the pathetic regards of his protesting eyes ! Oh, no memory can register.

*Wait.* What, my rival ! Is the rebel my rival ? a' dies.

*Lady.* No, don't kill him at once, Sir Rowland, starve him gradually inch by inch.

*Wait.* I'll do't. In three weeks he shall be barefoot ; in a month out at knees with begging an alms. He shall starve upward and upward, till he has nothing living but his head, and then go out in a stink like a candle's end upon a save-all.

*Lady.* Well, Sir Rowland, you have the way,—you are no novice in the labyrinth of love—you have the clue. But as I am a person, Sir Rowland, you must not attribute my yielding to any sinister appetite, or indigestion of widowhood ; nor impute my complacency to any lethargy of continence. I hope you do not think me prone to any iteration of nuptials—

*Wait.* Far be it from me—

*Lady.* If you do, I protest I must recede—or think that I have made a prostitution of decorums, but in the vehemenco of compassion, and to save the life of a person of so much importance—

But when there is likelihood of a marriage alliance, we may not be so serious about decorum.

*Wait.* My impatience madam, is the effect of my joy, and till I have the possession of your beautiful body, I will be tormented as on the rack.

*Lady.* You are extremely gallant, Sir Rowland ; you know how to push things to the fulfilment of your design with a force that cannot be resisted. But we must allow a day or two at least for the sake of decency of marriage.

*Wait.* You should rather say, for decency of funeral, madam. The delay will break my heart—or if it should fail, I shall be poisoned. My nephew will guess my intentions, and poison me, and I would willingly starve before I die. I would gladly go out of the world with that satisfaction.

*Lady.* Is he so unnatural, as you say ? Sincerely I would contribute much both to save your life and the fulfilment of your revenge. Not that I have got anything against him personally.

*Wait.* Treacherous to you ?

*Lady.* O Sir Rowland, the hours that he fell like a dead man at my feet, the tears he had shed, the oaths that he had sworn, the palpitations of heart that he had felt, the trances and the tremblings, the ardours and the ecstasies, the kneelings and the risings, the panting of his hearts and the gripping of hand, the agonies and the moving looks of that declared passionate love !

*Wait.* What, is he my rival ? Is the rebel my rival ? he dies for this.

*Lady.* No, don't kill him at once, Sir Rowland. Starve him gradually inch by inch.

*Wait.* I will do it. In three weeks from now I will turn him barefoot ; before the month is out you will find him begging alms on his knees. He will starve from foot upwards to head, till he has nothing living but his head only.

*Lady.* Well, Sir Rowland, you have the way, you are fully experienced in the subtleties of love—you have the key to the mysteries of love. But, as I am a person Sir Rowland, you must not think that I submit to your desire because of wicked lust or desire, or an unwillingness to widowhood. You should not also ascribe this yielding attitude to any lack of self-control. I also hope that you do not think me inclined to have repeatation of marriage—

*Wait.* Far be it from me—

*Lady.* If you do, I protest, I must withdraw. You should not also think that I have made a violation of propriety. What I am doing is just because I feel so strong compassion to save the life of so important a person like you—

*Wait.* I esteem it so—

*Lady.* Or else you wrong my condescension—

*Wait.* I do not, I do not—

*Lady.* Indeed you do.

*Wait.* I do not, fair shrine of virtue.

*Lady.* If you think the least scruple of carnality was an ingredient—

*Wait.* Dear madam, no. You are all camphor and frankincense, all chastity and odour.

*Lady.* Or that—

*Enter Foible*

*Foib.* Madam, the dancers are ready, and there 's one with a letter, who must deliver it into your own hands.

*Lady.* Sir Rowland, will you give me leave ? Think favourably, judge candidly, and conclude you have found a person who would suffer racks in honour's cause, dear Sir Rowland, will wait, on you incessantly. [*Exit*

*Wait.* Fie, fie ! What a slavery have I undergone ; spouse, hast thou any cordial ? I want spirits.

*Foib.* What a washy rogue art thou, to pant thus for a quarter of an hour's lying and swearing to a fine lady ?

*Wait.* Oh, she is the antidote to desire. Spouse, thou wilt fare the worse for't—I shall have no appetite to iteration of nuptials this eight and forty hours.—By this hand I'd rather be a chairman in the dog days than act Sir Rowland til this time to-morrow.

*Re-enter Lady Wishfort with a letter*

*Lady.* Call in the dancers. Sir Rowland, we'll sit, if you please, and see the entertainment, [*Dance.*] Now with your permission, Sir Rowland, I will persue my letter—I would open it in your presence, because I would not make you uneasy. If it should make you uneasy I would burn it—speak if it does—but you may see, the super-scription is like a woman's hand.

*Foib.* By heaven ! Mrs. Marwood's I know it. My heart aches—get it from her—[*Aside to Waitwell*]

*Wait.* A woman's hand ? No. madam, that's no woman's hand, I see that already. That's somebody whose throat must be cut.

*Lady.* Nay, Sir Rowland, since you give me a proof of your passion by your jealousy, I promise you I'll make a return, by a frank communication—You shall see it—we'll open it together—look you here.

[*Reads*] *Madam, though unknown to you*—Look you there, 'tis from nobody that I know—*I have that honour for your character, that I think myself obliged to let you know you are abused. He who pretends to be Sir Rowland is a cheat and a rascal*—

*Wait.* I esteem it so—

*Lady.* If you think otherwise, then you do injustice to me.

*Wait.* I do not, I do not—

*Lady.* Indeed you do.

*Wait.* I do not, you, the very temple of virtue.

*Lady.* If you think that the least desire of fleshly craving was the reason of my—

*Wait.* Dear madam, no, you are all purity and holiness.

*Lady.* Or that—

*Enter Foible*

*Foib.* Madam, the dancers are ready, and there is one with a letter, who must deliver it into your hands.

*Lady.* Sir Rowland, will you give me leave? Do not think ill of me, but judge in a frank way, and try to feel that you have found in me a person who is prepared to suffer agonies for the sake of honour. dear Sir Rowland, a person who will serve for all time to come. (*Exit.*

*Wait.* Shame, shame! What a slavery I have undergone; wife, do you have any stimulating drinks? I want spirits.

*Foib.* What a useless rogue you are, that you lose your spirit like this just because you had a quarter of an hour's lying and swearing to a fine lady!

*Wait.* Oh she acts as an antidote to any sexual desire. Wife, you will have the worst of time as a result of this. I shall have no desire for any love making after this at least for forty eight hours.

*Re-enter Lady Wishfort with a letter*

*Lady.* (*Dance*) Now with your permission, Sir Rowland, I will read my letter—I would open it in your presence, because I would not like to make you uneasy by my attention elsewhere. If it makes you uneasy, I will burn—speak if it does—but you may see very easily that the address on the top of the letter is written by a woman.

*Foib.* By heaven! It is Mrs. Marwood's handwriting, I know it. My heart aches—get it from her— (*To him*

*Wait.* A woman's handwriting! No, madam, that is not the handwriting of a woman, I can see that very clearly. That must be from somebody whose throat must be cut.

*Lady.* No, Sir Rowland, since you give me a proof of your passion for me by expressing your jealousy, I promise I will make a good turn, by a frank communication. You shall see it—we will open it together—look you here.

(*Reads*) 'Madam, though unknown to you,'—Look you there, it is from nobody that I know—'I have that honour for your character, that I think myself obliged to let you know that you are abused. He who pretends to be Sir Rowland is a cheat and a rascal—'

O heavens ! what's this ?

*Foib.* [*Aside*] Unfortunate, all's ruined.

*Wait.* How, how, let me see, let me see. [*Reading*] *A rascal and disguised, and suborned for that imposture,*—O villainy ! O villainy !—*by the contrivance of*—

*Lady.* I shall faint, I shall die, oh !

*Foib.* Say, 'tis your nephew's hand.—Quickly, his plot, swear, swear it. [*Whispers to him*]

*Wait.* Here's a villain ! Madam, don't you perceive it, don't you see it ?

*Lady.* Too well, too well. I have seen too much.

*Wait.* I told you at first, I knew the hand. A woman's hand ? The rascal writes a sort of a large hand ; your Roman hand—I saw there was a throat to be cut presently. If he were my son, as he is my nephew, I'd pistol him—

*Foib.* Oh, treachery ! But are you sure, Sir Rowland, it is his writing ?

*Wait.* Sure ? Am I here ? do I live ? do I love this pearl of India ? I have twenty letters in my pocket from him, in the same character.

*Lady.* How !

*Foib.* Oh, what luck it is, Sir Rowland, that you were present at this juncture ! This was the business that brought Mr. Mirabell disguised to Madam Millamant this afternoon. I thought something was contriving, when he stole by me and would have hid his face.

*Lady.* How, how !—I heard the villain was in the house indeed: and now I remember, my niece went away abruptly, when Sir Wilful was to have made his addresses.

*Foib.* Then, then, madam, Mr. Mirabell waited for her in her chamber ; but I would not tell your ladyship to discompose you when you were to receive Sir Rowland.

*Wait,* Enough, his date is short.

*Foib.* No, good Sir Rowland, don't incur the law.

*Wait* Law ! I care not for law. I can but die, and 'tis in a good cause.—My lady shall be satisfied of my truth and innocence, though it cost me my life.

*Lady.* No, dear Sir Rowland, don't fight, if you should be killed I must never show my face : or hanged ! Oh, consider my reputation, Sir Rowland. No, you shan't fight.—I'll go in and examine my niece ; I'll make her confess. I conjure you, Sir Rowland, by all your love, not to fight.

*Wait.* I am charmed, madam, I obey. But some proof you must let me give you. I'll go for a black box, which contains the writings of my whole estate, and deliver that into your hands.

O heavens ! what is this ?

*Foib.* Unfortunate. All is ruined.

*Wait.* How, let me see. (*Reading*) 'A rascal and disguised, and bribed for that imposture'—Oh, villainy !

*Lady.* I shall faint, I shall die, oh !

*Foib.* Say that it is your nephew's handwriting.—Quickly say that it is his plot, and swear, swear it.

*Wait.* Here's a villain ! Madam, don't you understand this !

*Lady.* I see it too well, too well. I have seen too much.

*Wait.* I told you at first I knew the handwriting. You said it was a woman's hand. The rescal writes a kind of a large hand ; your Roman hand—I could understand at once that a throat was to be cut immediately. If he were my son, as he is my nephew, I would have killed him with a pistol–

*Foib.* Oh, treachery ! But are you sure, it is his writing ?

*Wait.* Sure ? Am I here ? do I love this pear: of India ? I have twenty letters in my pocket from him written in the same hand.

*Lady.* How !

*Foib.* Oh, what luck it is, Sir Rowland, that you were present at this crisis. This was the business that brought Mr. Mirabell disguised to Madam Millamant this afternoon. I could guess that something was on the plotting, when he stealthily entered hiding his face when he saw me.

*Lady.* How, how !—I heard that the villain was in the house; yes, I did ; and now I remember, my niece went away abruptly, when Sir Wilful was to have made his addresses.

*Foib.* Then, then, madam, Mr. Mirabell waited for her in her chamber ; but I did not tell your ladyship about this lest it caused unhappiness and confusion to you when you were to receive Sir Rowland.

*Wait.* Enough of this. His days are now numbered.

*Foib.* No good Sir Rowland, don't make yourself liable to legal prosecution.

*Wait.* Law ? I care a fig for law. I am not afraid of dying ; moreover it is in a good cause—my lady shall be satisfied of my truth and innocence, though it may cost me my life.

*Lady.* No, dear Sir Rowland, don't fight. If you are killed or hanged I can never show my face. Oh, consider my reputation, Sir Rowland. No, you should not fight.—I will go in and examine my niece ; I shall make her confess. I appeal to you, Sir Rowland, by all your love, not to fight.

*Wait.* I am charmed, madam. I will obey you. But you must let me give you some proof. I will go to get my black box which contains the documents of all my estates, and give it to your hand for custody.

*Lady* Ay, dear Sir Rowland, that will be some comfort, bring the black box.

*Wait.* And may I presume to bring a contract to be signed this night ? May I hope so far ?

*Lady.* Bring what you will ; but come alive, pray come alive. Oh, this is a happy discovery.

*Wait* Dead or alive I'll come—and married we will be in spite of treachery ; ay, and—get an heir that shall defeat the last remaining glimpse of hope in my abandoned nephew. Come, my buxom widow :

Ere long you shall substantial proof receive
That I'm an arrant knight—

***Foib.*** Or arrant knave. [*Exeunt*]

*Lady.* Yes, dear Sir Rowland, that will be some comfort. Please bring the black box.

*Wait.* And may I dare to bring a contract to be signed this night? May I hope so far?

*Lady.* Bring whatever you like; but come alive, pray, come alive. Oh, this is a happy discovery of the plot.

*Wait.* Dead or alive, I will definitely come—and we will be married in spite of all the treachery against us: and then we get an heir that shall defeat the last glimpse of hope in my disinherited nephew. Come, my plump and handsome widow;

Ere long you shall substantial proof receive
Tha I'm an errant knight——

(*Exeunt.*

*Foib.* Or will she receive substantial proof that you are a great scoundrel!

## ACT FIVE

*A room in Lady Wishfort's house*

*Enter Lady Wishfort and Foible*

*Lady.* Out of my house, out of my house, thou viper, thou serpent, that I have fostered: thou bosom traitress, that I raised from nothing—begone, begone, begone, go, go—that I took from washing of old gauze and weaving of dead hair with a bleak blue nose, over a chafing-dish of starved embers, and dining behind a traverse rag, in a shop no bigger than a bird-cage,—go, go, starve again, do, do.

*Foib.* Dear madam, I'll beg pardon on my knees.

*Lady.* Away, out, out, go set up for yourself again—do, drive a trade, do with your threepenny-worth of small ware, flaunting upon a packthreath, under a brandy-seller's bulk, or against a dead wall by a balled-monger. Go, hang out an old frisoneer-gorget with a yard of yellow colberteen again ; do ; an old gnawed mask, two rows of pins and a child's fiddle ; a glass necklace with the beads broken, and a quilted nightcap with one ear. Go, go drive a trade.—These were your commodities, you treacherous trull, this was the merchandise you dealt in, when I took you into my house, placed you next myself, and made you governante of my whole family. You have forgot this, have you, now you have feathered your nest ?

*Foib.* No, no, dear madam. Do but hear me, have but a moment's patience. I'll confess all. Mr. Mirabell seduced me ; I am not the first that he has wheedled with his dissembling tongue ; your ladyship's own wisdom has been deluded by him, then how should I, a poor ignorant, defend myself? O madam, if you knew but what he promised me, and how he assured me your ladyship should come to no damage—or else the wealth of the Indies should not have bribed me to conspire against so good, so sweet, so kind a lady as you have been to me.

*Lady.* No damage ? What, to betray me to marry me to a cast-serving-man ; to make me a receptacle, an hospital for a decayed pimp ? No damage ? O thou frontless impudence, more than a big-bellied actress.

*Foib.* Pray do but hear me, madam, he could not marry your ladyship, madam—no, indeed, his marriage was to have been void in law : for he was married to me first to secure your ladyship. He could not have bedded your

## ACT FIVE

**SCENE :** *A room in Lady Wishfort's house*

*Enter Lady Wishfort and Foible*

*Lady.* Get out of my house, get out of my house, you viper, you snake, : you great traitress, that I raised from nothing —get out, go.— You were nothing but a poor starving maid, keeping a mean shop, making wigs out of the hair of dead persons when I engaged you. You have forgotten how you used to sit before burnt—out coal with a bleak blue nose on account of cold ; you used to eat behind a torn curtain, in a shop no bigger than a bird-cage.

*Foib.* Dear madam, I will beg your pardon on my knees.

*Lady.* Away, out, out, go and find a place for yourself again—do, carry on some trade with your three-penny worth of small ware, displaying coarse thread for sewing up packages, under a brandy-seller's stall, or against, a dead wall by a ballad-seller. Go, start your former mean business again.—Go, go, carry on your old trade. These were the things which you used to carry on your trade, this was the merchandise you dealt in, you treacherous whore, when I took you into my house, placed you next to myself, and made you governess of the whole family. Now that you have made sufficient money in my service, you have forgotten all this, haven't you ?

*Foib.* No, no, dear madam. Only just hear me ; have but a moment's patience. I will confess everything to you. It was Mr. Mirabell who seduced me. I am not the first person to be the victim of his dissembling tongue ; your ladyship yourself were deluded by him despite the fact that you are such an intelligent woman. When that is the case, then how should I, a poor ignorant girl defend myself? Oh, madam, if you only knew what he had promised me, and how he had assured me that you ladyship's if would not be affected. Otherwise not even the wealth of the Indies could have bribed me to conspire against so sweet, so good, so kind a lady as you have been to me.

*Lady.* You mean to say he has not done any damage to my reputation ? To betray me, to marry me to a serving man out of service, to make me suffer and bound to an old impudent rascal—don't you call this damage ? O, you shameless, impudent creature, you are worse than an actress who has become pregnant with a bastard.

*Foib.* I will pray you just to hear me, madam. He could not marry your ladyship, madam--if he had tried to do so it would have been declared void by the law, because of the very fact that he was already married to me first, which was a security to your ladyship. He could not have bedded with your ladyship ;

ladyship; for if he had consummated with your ladyship, he must have run the risk of the law and been put upon his clergy.—Yes, indeed, I enquired of the law in that case before I would meddle or make.

*Lady.* What, then I have been your property, have I? I have been convenient to you, it seems while you were catering for Mirabell? I have been broker for you? What, have you made a passive bawd of me?—This exceeds all precedent; I am brought to fine uses, to become a botcher of second-hand marriages between Abigails and Andrews! I'll couple you. Yes, I'll baste you together, you and your Philander, I'll Duke's Place you, as I'm a person. Your turtle is in custody already: you shall coo in the same cage, if there be constable or warrant in the parish. [*Exit.*

*Foib.* O that ever I was born, O that I was ever married—a bride, ay, I shall be a Bridewell-bride—Oh! [*Cries*]

*Enter Mrs. Fainall*

*Mrs. Fain.* Poor Foible, what's the matter?

*Foib.* O madam, my lady's gone for a constable; I shall be had to a justice, and put to Bridewell to beat hemp; poor Waitwell's gone to prison already.

*Mrs. Fain.* Have a good heart, Foible, Mirabell's gone to give security for him. This is all Marwood's and my husband's doing.

*Foib.* Yes, yes, I know it, madam; she was in my lady's closet, and overheard all that you said to me before dinner. She sent the letter to my lady; and that missing effect, Mr. Fainall laid this plot to arrest Waitwell, when he pretended to go for the papers; and in the meantime Mrs. Marwood declared all to my lady.

*Mrs. Fain.* Was there no mention made of me in the letter? My mother does not suspect my being in the confederacy? I fancy Marwood has not told her, though she has told my husband.

*Foib.* Yes, madam; but my lady did not see that part: we stifled the letter before she read so far. Has that mischievous devil told Mr. Fainall of your ladyship, then?

*Mrs. Fain.* Ay, all's out, my affair with Mirabell, everything discovered. This is the last day of our living together, that's my comfort.

*Foib.* Indeed, madam, and so 'tis a comfort if you knew all. He has been even with your ladyship; which I could have told you long enough since, but I love to keep peace and quietness by my goodwill: I had rather bring friends together than set 'em at distance. But Mrs. Marwood and he are nearer related than ever their parents thought for.

*Mrs. Fain.* Sayest thou so, Foible? Canst thou prove this?

for if he had slept with your ladyship, he must have run the risk of being punished according to the law. In fact I made all enquiries regarding the law.

*Lady.* Then I have been your tool, haven't I? I have been broker for you; you used me as a passive prostitute for your customer. I have been used in a very fine way—a maker of marriages, arranged with an ulterior motive between maid-servants and servants. I will stich two of you togetther, put you in chains and throw you into the prison. Your lover is already in custody; you will also go to the same prison, (*Exit.*

*Foib.* Oh, that I was ever born, oh, that I was ever married I am a bride, indeed, I shall be a Bridewell-bride!

*Enter Mrs. Fainall*

*Mrs. Fain.* Poor Foible, what is the matter?

*Foib.* Oh, madam, my lady has gone to call a constable. Poor Waitwell is already confined in the prison.

*Mrs. Fain.* Don't get disheartened, Foible: Mirabell has already gone to give security for him to get his release. All these have been done by Marwood and my husband.

*Foib.* Yes, yes, I know that, madam. She was in my lady's closet, and overheard all that you said to me before dinner. She sent the letter to my lady; when that proved unfruitful, Mr Fainall laid this plot to arrest Waitwell, when he pretended to go for the papers, and in the meantime Mrs. Marwood disclosed everything to my lady.

*Mrs. Fain.* Was there no mention made of me in the letter? I don't think my mother suspects my involvement. I hope Marwood has not told her.

*Foib.* Yes, she has written about you in the letter, but my lady has not seen that part of the letter. Has that devil told Mr. Fainall of your ladyship?

*Mrs. Fain.* Yes, everything is out. Everything about my affair with Mirabell is already out. This is the last day of our living together, that is my comfort.

*Foib.* Indeed, madam, it would be a comfort only if you knew all. He has been carrying on affair with Mrs. Marwood, as you have been carrying on with Mr. Mirabell; of this I could have told you long before. But I love to keep peace and quietness by my good will: I will rather be a party to unite friends together than start quarrel and set them apart. But Mrs. Marwood and Mr. Fainall are more intimately related than their parents thought for.

*Mrs. Fain.* Do you say so Foible? Can you prove this?

*Foib.* I can take my oath of it, madam, so can Mrs. Mincing: we have had many a fair word from Madam Marwood, to conceal something that passed in our chamber one evening when you were at Hyde Park;—and we were thought to have gone a-walking: but we went up unawares,—though we were sworn to secrecy too; Madam Marwood took a book and swore us upon it: but it was a book of poems,—so long as it was not a Bible oath, we may break it with a safe conscience.

*Mrs. Fain.* This discovery is the most opportune thing I could wish, Now, Mincing?

*Enter Mincing*

*Minc.* My lady would speak with Mrs. Foible, mem. Mr. Mirabell is with her; he has set your spouse at liberty, Mrs. Foible, and would have you hide yourself in my lady's closet till my old lady's anger in abated. Oh, my old lady is in a perilous passion at something Mr. Fainall has said: he swears, and my old lady cries. There's a fearful hurricane, I vow. He says, mem, how that he'll have my lady's fortune made over to him, or 'll be divorced.

*Mrs. Fain.* Does your lady or Mirabell know that?

*Minc.* Yes, mem, they have sent me to see if Sir Wilful be sober, and to bring him to them. My lady is resolved to have him, I think, rather than lose such a vast sum as six thousand pounds. Oh, come, Mrs. Foible, I hear my old lady.

*Mrs. Fain.* Foible, you must tell Mincing that she must prepare to vouch when I call her.

*Foib.* Yes, yes, madam.

*Minc.* Oh, yes, mem, I'll vouch anything for your ladyship's service, be what it will.

[*Exeunt Mincing and Foible.*

*Enter Lady Wishfort and Mrs. Marwood*

*Lady.* O my dear friend, how can I enumerate the benefits that I have received from your goodness? To you I owe the timely discovery of the false vows of Mirabell: to you I owe the detection of the imposter Sir Rowland. And now you are become an intercessor with my son-in-law, to save the honour of my house, and compound for the frailties of my daughter. Well, friend, you are enough to reconcile me to the bad world, or else I would retire to deserts and solitude; and feed harmless sheep by groves and purling stream. Dear Marwood, let us leave the world, and retire by ourselves and be shepherdesses.

*Mrs. Mar.* Let us first dispatch the affair in hand, madam. We shall have leisure to think of retirement afterwards. Here's one who is concerned in the treaty.

[*Turning to Mrs. Fainall.*

*Foib.* I can swear by it, madam ; and so can Mrs. Mincing ; she has been very sweet to us so that we conceal something that passed in our chamber one evening when you were at Hyde Park ; they thought that we had gone out too for walking ; but we went up unawares. We were, however, sworn to secrecy—Madam Marwood took a book and swore us upon it : but it was but a book of poems,—so long it was not an oath on the Bible, we can break it with a safe conscience.

*Mrs. Fain.* This places me in an advantageous position.

*Enter Mincing*

*Minc.* My lady likes to speak with Mrs. Foible, mem. Mr, Mirabell is with her ; he has set your husband at liberty, Mrs. Foible, and asks you to hide yourself in my lady's closet, till my old lady's anger is abated. Oh, my old lady is extremely angry at something Mr. Fainall has said: he swears and my old lady cries. There is a fearful stormy scene, I vow. He says, mem, that he must have my lady's fortune transferred to him. Otherwise he will divorce you.

*Mrs. Fain.* Does your lady or Mirabell know that ?

*Minc.* Yes, mem, they have sent me to see if Sir Wilful is in his sense, and if so bring him to them. Come Mrs. Foible, hide yourself. I hear the foot-step of my old lady.

*Mrs. Fain.* Foible, you must tell Mincing that she must prepare to swear the truth when I call her to do so.

*Foib.* Yes, yes, madam.

*Minc.* Oh, yes, mem, I will swear anything to serve the purpose of your ladyship, be what it will.

*Exeunt Mincing and Foible.*

*Enter Lady Wishfort and Mrs. Marwood*

*Lady.* Oh, my dear friend, I can never enumerate the benefits I have received from your goodness. It is to you that I am grateful for the timely knowledge about the false vows of Mirabell to me ; it is again to you that I should be grateful for the detection of the imposter Sir Rowland. And now you have offered to act as a mediator between me and my son-in-law in order to save the honour of my house, and seltle things for the weakness of my daughter by payment of money. Well, friend, without you I would rather go to a desert or some other solitude to seek comfort. I would be busy in nothing but feeding harmless sheep by groves and murmuring streams. Dear Marwood, let us leave the world, and retire by ourselves and be shepherdesses.

*Mrs. Mar.* Let us first dispose of the affair in hand, madam. We shall have enough time to think of retirement afterwards. Here you find one party who is interested in the settlement of the affair.

*Lady.* Oh, daughter, daughter, is it possible thou shouldst be my child, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, and as I may say, another me, and yet transgress the most minute particle of severe virtue ? Is it possible you should lean aside to iniquity, who have been cast in the direct mould of virtue ? I have not only been a mould but a pattern for you, and a model for you, after you were brought into the world.

*Mrs. Fain.* I don't understand your ladyship.

*Lady.* Not understand ? Why, have you not been naught ? Have you not been sophisticated ? Not understand ? Here I am ruined to compound for your caprices and your cuckoldoms. I must pawn my plate and my jewels, and ruin my niece, and all little enough—

*Mrs. Fain.* I am wronged and abused, and so are you. 'Tis a false accusation, as false as hell, as false as your friend there, ay, or your friend's friend, my false husband.

*Mrs. Mar.* My friend, Mrs. Fainall ? Your husband my friend, what do you mean ?

*Mrs. Fain.* I know what I mean, madam, and so do you, and so shall the world at a time convenient.

*Mrs. Mar.* I am sorry to see you so passionate, madam. More temper would look more like innocence. But I have done. I am sorry my zeal to serve your ladyship and family should admit of misconstruction, or make me liable to affronts. You will pardon me, madam, if I meddle no more with an affair in which I am not personally concerned.

*Lady.* Oh, dear friend, I am so ashamed that you should meet with such returns. You ought to ask pardon on your knees, ungrateful creature ; she deserves more from you, than all your life can accomplish. Oh, don't leave me destitute in this perplexity ;—no, stick to me my good genius.

*Mrs. Fain.* I tell you, madam, you're abused. Stick to you ? ay, like a leech, to suck your best blood—she'll drop off when she's full. Madam, you shan't pawn a bodkin, nor part with a brass counter, in composition for me. I defy 'em all. Let 'em prove their aspersions: I know my own innocence, and dare stand a trial.

[*Exit*

*Lady.* Why, if she should be innocent, if she should be wronged after all, ha ? I don't know what to think,—and I promise you, her education has been unexceptionable—I may say it : for I chiefly made it my own care to initiate her very infancy in the rudiments of virtue, and to impress upon her tender years a young odium and aversion to the very sight of men. Ay, friend, she would ha' shrieked if she had but seen a man, till she was in her teens. I 'm a person 'tis true—she was never suffered

*Lady.* Oh, daughter, daughter, is it possible that you should be my child, and yet deviate from the path of honesty and decency? Is it possible that you should become immoral? I have not only tried to bring you up in the path of virtue, I have shown you a model myself by my own life.

*Mrs. Fain.* I don't understand your ladyship.

*Lady.* You don't understand me? Why, have you not been wicked? Have you not been corrupt? You have brought things to such a pass that I may have to pawn all my plates and my jewels, and ruin my niece, and all little enough—

*Mrs. Fain.* I am wronged and abused and so are you. It is a false accusation, as false as hell, as false as your friend there, yes, or as false as your friend's friend, my false husband.

*Mrs. Mar.* My friend, Mrs. Fainall? Your husband, my friend.

*Mrs. Fain.* I know what I mean, madam and so do you.

*Mrs. Mar.* I am sorry to see you so angry, madam. I am sorry to find that my eagerness to serve your ladyship and family should be misunderstood like this, and make me face such insults. You will pardon me, madam, because I am not going to involve myself any more with an affair in which I am not personally concerned.

*Lady.* Oh, my dear friend, I am so ashamed of the fact that you have met with such returns for your goodness. Ungrateful creature (addressing her daughter), you must ask pardon on your knees. She deserves more from you, than all your life can accomplish. Oh, don't leave me in this miserable condition and perplexity—please, stick to me, my good genius.

*Mrs. Fain.* Let me tell you, madam, that you are cheated. You are asking her to stick to you? Yes, of course, she should, like a leech, to suck your best blood—she will leave you when she has eaten away all your money. Madam, you shall not pawn even a hair pin, nor part with even a brass coin, by way of settlement for my supposed guilt. I defy them all. Let them prove their slanders: I know my own innocence, and dare stand a trial.

(*Exit.*

*Lady.* Why, if she is innocent, she cannot be wronged after all, isn't it? I don't know what to think of. Let me assure you, that her education has been perfect and blameless —I may vouch for it. I took care of her myself right from her infancy in instructing her in the elementary principles of virtue. While she was in her teen age I did all to form in her a hatred and aversion at the very sight of men. Yes, friend, indeed she would shriek if she had but seen a man, till she was of age. As I am a person, all these are true.—I never allowed her to play with a male child.

to play with a male-child though but in coats: nay, her very babies were of the feminine gender. Oh, she never looked a man in the face but her own father, or the chaplain, and him we made a shift to put upon her for a woman, by the help of his long garments, and his sleek face; till she was going in her fifteen.

*Mrs. Mar.* 'Twas much she should be deceived so long.

*Lady.* I warrant you, or she would never have borne to have been catechized by him; and have heard his long lectures against singing and dancing, and such debaucheries: and going to filthy plays; and profane music-meetings, where the lewd trebles squeak nothing but bawdy, and the basses roar blasphemy. Oh, she would have swooned at the sight or name of an obscene play-book—and can I think after all this, that my daughter can be naught? What, a whore? And thought it excommunication to set her foot within the door of a play-house. Oh, dear friend, I can't believe it, no no; as she says. let him prove it, let him prove it.

*Mrs. Mar.* Prove it, madam? What, and have your name prostituted in a public court; yours and your daughter's reputation worried at the bar by a back of bawling lawyers? To be ushered in which an *O yes* of scandal; and have your case opened by and old fumbling lecher in a quoil like a man midwife, to bring your daughter's infamy to light; to be a theme for legal punsters, and quibblers by the statute: and become a jest, against a rule of court, where there is no precedent for a jest in any record; not even in Doomsday Book: to discompose the gravity of the bench, and provoke naughty interrogatories in more naughty Law Latin; while the good judge, tickled with the proceeding, simpers under a grey beard, and fidgets off and on his cushion as if he had swallowed cantharides, or sat upon cow-itch.

*Lady.* Oh, 'tis very hard?

*Mrs. Mar.* And then to have my young revellers of the Temple take notes, like prentices at a conventicle; and after talk it over again in Commons, or before drawers in an eating-house.

*Lady.* Worse and worse.

*Mrs. Mar.* Nay, this is nothing: if it would end here 'twere well But it must after this be consigned by the short-hand writers to the public press: and from thence be transferred to the hands, nay, into the throats and lungs of hawkers with voices more licentious than the loud flounderman's: and this you must hear till you are stunned; nay, you must hear nothing else for some days.

*Lady.* Oh, 'tis insupportable. No, no, dear friend, make it up, make it up; ay, ay, I'll compound, I'll give up all, myself and my all, my niece and her all—anything, everything for composition.

though but in coats; not only that, I even took care to see that the dolls she played with were all of the feminine gender. Oh, she never looked at any man but her own father, or the priest. We even played a trick with her to pass off the chaplain as a woman. The chaplain's long coat and smooth face helped in this. This way she was brought up, till she became fifteen.

*Mrs. Mar.* No; she should not have been deceived so long.

*Lady.* To speak the truth, if we had not deceived her that way, I could not otherwise compel her to listen to his long lectures against singing, dancing and such other immoral wickedness. Oh, she would have fainted even at the sight or name of an obscene play-book. After all this how can I believe that she has become a whore? All these have happened to her who would have thought it an irreligious act even to set foot within the door of a playhouse. Oh, dear friend, I can't believe it, no, no.

*Mrs. Mar.* Do you want him to prove it. What, do you want that your name should become disreputable when he makes this affair public in the law-court? Do you wish your and your daughter's reputation to be damaged at the bar by a group of quarrelling lawyers? Do you wish to be ushered into the conrt-room with your name mentioned by scandalmongers with gratified relish? Do you wish to be the subject of legal interest for quibbling lawyers, and become a jest in any record, not even in Doomsday Book, to disturb the gravity of the bench, and provoke wicked questionings in legal terms in Latin language, while the good judge, amused with the proceedings, smiles affectedly under his grey beard, and moves restlessly off and on his cushion as if he had swallowed blister-fly or a stinging plant?

*Lady.* Oh, that will be very hard, indeed!

*Mrs. Mar.* And then you will see the young law students of the Inns of Court taking notes to the divorce case in the same way as Apprentice clergyman does of the sermons at a conventicle (religious meeting).

*Lady.* Worse and worse.

*Mrs. Mar.* No, no, this is nothing. But after the proceedings, the case will be noted down by the shorthand writers for the public press to publish it, from where it will go to the hands of the newspaper hawkers, who will make a field day with the scandal with voices more noisy and obscene than those of the fishmongers. This you have to suffer and hear till you are stunned. in fact, you will hear nothing else for some days except about this scandal.

*Lady.* Oh, it will be insupportable. No, no, dear friend. try to patch it up, try to patch it up. Yes yes, I will pay for this, I will give up all, myself, and my all, my niece and her all—anything, everything for a settlement.

*Mrs. Mar.* Nay, madam, I advise nothing, I only lay before you, as a friend, the inconveniences which perhaps you have overseen. Here comes Mr. Fainall, if he will be satisfied to huddle up all in silence, I shall be glad. You must think I would rather congratulate than condole with you

*Enter Fainall*

*Lady.* Ay, ay, I do not doubt it, dear Marwood : no, no, I do not doubt it.

*Fain.* Well, madam; I have suffered myself to be overcome by the importunity of this lady your friend; and am content you shall enjoy your own proper estate during life; on condition you oblige yourself never to marry, under such penalty as I think convenient.

*Lady.* Never to marry ?

*Fain.* No more Sir Rowland. The next imposture may not be so timely detected.

*Mrs. Mar.* That condition, I dare answer, my lady will consent to without difficulty; she has already but too much experienced the perfidiousness of men. Besides, madam when we retire to our pastoral solitude we shall bid adieu to all other thoughts.

*Lady.* Ay, that's true but in case of necessity ; as of health, or some such emergency—

*Fain.* Oh, if you are prescribed marriage, you shall be considered : I will only reserve to myself the power to choose for you. If your physic be wholesome, it matters not who is your apothecary. Next, my wife shall settle on me the remainder of her fortune not made over already; and for her maintenance depend entirely on my discretion.

*Lady.* This is most inhumanly savage; exceeding the barbarity of a Muscovite husband.

*Fain.* I learned it from his Czarish Majesty's retinue, in a winter evening's conference over brandy and pepper, amongst other secrets of matrimony and policy, as they are at present practised in the northern hemisphere. But this must be agreed unto, and that positively. Lastly, I will be endowed, in right of my wife, with that six thousand pounds which is the moiety of Mrs. Millamant's fortune in your possession; and which she has forfeited (as will appear by the last will and testament of your deceased husband. Sir Jonathan Wishfort) by her disobedience in contracting herself against your consent or knowledge; and by refusing the offered match with Sir Wilful Witwoud, which, you, like a careful aunt, had provided for her

*Mrs. Mar.* No, madam, I will not take the risk of giving you any advice to that effect. Mr. Fainall is coming here. If he is satisfied to hush up everything in silence, I shall be glad. If he does I will but congratulate you.

*Enter Fainall*

*Lady.* Yes, yes, I do not doubt it, dear Marwood.

*Fain.* Well, madam, I have with great reluctance agreed to come to a compromise at the great entreaty of this lady, your friend ; and I am satisfied that you shall enjoy your own personal estate during your own life time on this condition that you will never oblige yourself to marry.

*Lady.* Never to marry ?

*Fain.* No more Sir Rowland. The next impostor may not be so timely detected.

*Mrs. Mar.* That condition, I dare answer on behalf of my lady, that she will consent to without objection. She has already but experienced much the treachery of men. Besides, madam, when we retire to our pastoral solitude we shall say good-bye to all other thoughts.

*Lady.* Yes, that is true ; but in case of necessity, suppose I am advised to marry on grounds of health, or some such emergency—

*Fain.* Oh, if it is prescribed that you should get married, then it will be considered. I shall only reserve to myself the power to choose your man. If a husband promotes your health, it matters not who is your doctor. Next, my wife has to hand over to me the rest of her fortune, which is not given over to her already ; she will entirely depend on my discretion for her allowance and maintenance.

*Lady.* This is most inhumanly savage ; you are exceeding the barbarity of a Russian husband (who was supposed to be very cruel in those days).

*Fain,* Yes, madam, I learned it from the followers of Peter the Great of Russia who visited our country recently. I have got this experience of barbarity while I was drinking brandy and pepper with them one evening. This is one of the many secrets of matrimony as they are at present practised in the northern hemisphere. But this must be agreed and this is one of the must of the conditions. Lastly, I must be given as a rightful property of my wife, that six thousand pound of Mrs. Millamant's fortune in your possession which she has forfeited (as will appear by the last will and testament of your deceased husband, Sir Jonathan Wishfort) by her disobedience in contracting herself against your knowledge or consent, and by refusing the offered match with Sir Wilful Witwoud, which you, like a careful aunt, had provided for her.

*Lady.* My nephew was *non compos*: and could not make his addresses.

*Fain.* I come to make demands—I'll hear no objections.

*Lady.* You will grant me time to consider?

*Fain.* Yes, while the instrument is drawing, to which you must set your hand till more sufficient deeds can be perfected: which I will take care shall be done with all possible speed. In the meanwhile I will go for the said instrument, and till my return you may balance this matter in your own discretion. [*Exit.*

*Lady.* This insolence is beyond all precedent, all parallel; must I be subject to this merciless villain?

*Mrs. Mar.* 'Tis severe indeed, madam, that you should smart for your daughter's wantonness.

*Lady.* 'Twas against my consent that she married this barbarian, but she would have him, though her year was not out. Ah! her first husband, my son Languish, would not have carried it thus. Well that was my choice, this is hers; she is matched now with a witness. —I shall be mad, dear friend, is there no comfort for me? Must I live to be confiscated at this rebel-rate? —Here come two more of my Egyptian plagues too.

*Enter Millamant and Sir Wilful*

*Sir Wil.* Aunt, your servant.

*Lady.* Out, caterpillar, call not me aunt; I know thee not.

*Sir Wil.* I confess I have been a little in disguise, as they say. 'Sheart! and I 'm sorry for't. What would you have? I hope I committed no offence, aunt, and if I did I am willing to make satisfaction; and what can a man say fairer? If I have broke anything I'll pay for't, and it cost a pound. And so let that content for what 's past, and make no more words. For what's to come, to pleasure you I'm willing to marry my cousin. So pray let's all be friends, she and I are agreed upon the matter before a witness.

*Eady.* How 's this, dear niece? Have I any comfort? Can this be true?

*Milla.* I am content to be a sacrifice to your repose, madam; and to convince you that I had no hand in the plot, as you were misinformed, I have laid my commands on Mirabell to come in person, and be a witness that I give my hand to this flower of kinghthood; and for the contract that passed between Mirabell and me. I have obliged him to make a resignation of it in your ladyship's presence. He is without, and waits your leave for admittance.

*Lady.* Well, I 'll swear I am something revived at this testimony of your obedience; but I cannot admit that traitor. I fear

*Lady.* My nephew was not master of himself, and therefore could not make his addresses.

*Fain.* I am to forward demands, not to hear objections.

*Lady.* You will grant me time to consider your demands.

*Fain.* Yes, that much time as will be required in the preparation of the deed, to which you must set your hand till a better deed is made ; which I am sure will be done with all possible speed. In the meanwhile I will go for the said deed. Till my return you can consider this matter in your own way.

(*Exit Fainall.*

*Lady.* This insolence is beyond all precedent, all parallel ; must I be subject to this merciless villain ?

*Mrs. Mar* It is indeed severe, madam, that you should suffer all this for your daughter's wickedness.

*Lady.* It was against my consent that she married this barbarian. Ah, her first husband, my son Languish, would not have carried the matter in this manner. Well, that was my choice, this is hers ; well, she had found a very good husband, indeed. I shall go mad, dear friend. Is there no comfort for me ? Must I live to be looted in this cruel and unjust manner by this rebellious man ? Here comes two more of my troubles.

*Enter Millament and Sir Wilful*

*Sir Wil.* Aunt, your servant.

*Lady.* Out, caterpillar do not call me your aunt.

*Sir Wil.* I confess that I was under the influence of liquor. I am sorry for it. What would you have ? I hope I committed no offence, aunt, and if I did I am willing to compensate for that. If I have broken anything I will pay for it, even if that cost a pound. With that let us forget the past, be satisfied, and have no more words on the subject. More important is, that I am going to marry my cousin for your satisfaction. So pray let us all be friends. She and I are agreed about the matter before a witness.

*Lady.* How is this come about, dear niece ? Have I got some comfort at last ? Can this be true ?

*Milla.* I am happy to become a sacrifice for your sake and happiness, madam ; and to convince you that I had no no hand in the plot, as you were misinformed, I have made a special request to Mirabell to come in person, and be a witness that I give my hand to this flower of knighthood ; and for the affair that passed between me and Mirabell, I have obliged him to renounce it before your ladyship's presence. He is waiting outside, and begs your permission to be admitted.

*Lady.* Well, I will swear that I am something revived at this testimony of your obedience ; but I cannot admit that traitor. I am afraid.

I cannot fortify myself to support his appearance. He is as terrible to me as a Gorgon; if I see him I fear I shall turn to stone, petrify incessantly.

*Milla.* If you disoblige him he may resent your refusal, and insist upon the contract still. Then 'tis the last time he will be offensive to you.

*Lady.* Are you sure it will be the last time? If I were sure of that—shall I never see him again?

*Milla.* Sir Wilful, you and he are to travel together, are you not?

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, the gentleman 's a civil gentleman, aunt, let him come in; why, we are sworn brothers and fellow-travellers. We are to be Pylades and Orestes, he and I—he is to be my interpreter in foreign parts. He has been overseas once already; and with proviso that I marry my cousin, will cross 'em once again, only to bear me company. 'Sheart, I 'll call him in, An I set on 't once, he shall come in; and see who'll hinder him.

[*Goes to the door and hems*]

*Mrs. Mar.* This is precious fooling, if it would pass; but I 'll know the bottom of it.

*Lady.* Oh, dear Marwood, you are not going?

*Mrs. Mar.* Not far, madam; I 'll return immediately. [*Exit*

*Re-enter Sir Wilful and Mirabell*

*Sir Wil.* Look up, man, I'll stand by you, 'sbud, an she do frown, she can't kill you. Besides, harkee, she dare not frown desperately, because her face is none of her own; 'sheart, an she should, her forehead would wrinkle like the coat of a cream-cheese; but mum for that, fellow-traveller.

*Mira.* If a deep sense of the many injuries I have offered to so good a lady, with a sincere remorse, and a hearty contrition, can but obtain the least glance of compassion, I am too happy. Ah, madam, there was a time—but let it be forgotten—I confess I have deservedly forfeited the high place I once held, of sighing at your feet. Nay, kill me not, by turning from me in disdain. I come not to plead for favour, nay, not for pardon; I am a suppliant only for pity—I am going where I never shall behold you more.

*Sir Wil* How, fellow-traveller!—You shall go by yourself then.

*Mira.* Let me be pitied first; and afterwards forgotten—I ask no more.

*Sir Wil* By our Lady, a very reasonable request, and will cost you nothing, aunt. Come, come, forgive and forget, aunt, why you must and you are Christian.

*Mira.* Consider, madam, in reality, you could not receive much prejudice; it was an innocent device; though I confess it had a face of guiltiness—it was at most an

I cannot bear to suffer his appearance before me. He is as terrible to me as a Gorgon; if I see him I fear I shall turn to stone immediately.

*Milla.* If you disoblige him, he may resent your refusal and insist upon a marriage with me.

*Lady.* Are you sure it will be the last time?

*Milla.* Sir Wilful, you and he are to travel together, are you not?

*Sir Wil.* Aunt, let him come in; why, we are sworn brothers and fellow-travellers. He and I—he is to be my interpreter in foreign lands. He had been abroad once already, and on the condition that I marry my cousin will cross the Channel once more for my sake and give me a company. 'Sheart, I will call him inside. Once that I have set on it, he shall come in. I will see who can stop it.

[*Goes to the door and hems.*

*Mrs. Mar.* If this plan of theirs succeeds then it is going to be a fine fooling. But I must find out the real truth of it.

*Lady.* Oh, dear Marwood, you are not going away?

*Mrs. Mar.* I am not going far, madam. I will return soon.

[*Exit.*

*Re-enter Sir Wilful and Mirabell*

*Sir Wil.* Look up, man, I will stand by you, Besides, listen, she will not dare frewn desperately, because her face is heavily painted.

*Mira.* If a deep sense of the many injuries I have done to so good a lady, with a sincere remorse, and a hearty repentance, can but obtain from her the least glance of kindsness from her, I am too happy. Ah, madam, there was a time—but let it be forgotten—I confess that I deservedly forfeited the high place I once had, of sighing at your feet. No, no do not kill me by turning away from me in disdain. I have not come to plead any favour from you, no, I have not come for your pardon I will only beg your pity—I am going away where I will never see you any more—

*Sir Wil.* How, fellow-traveller!—You shall go by yourself then.

*Mira.* Let me be pitied first; and afterwards forgotten—I ask no more.

*Sir Wil.* By our lady, it is a very reasonable request, and will cost you nothing, aunt. Come, come, forgive and forget, aunt. Why, you must if you are a Christian.

*Mira.* Consider, madam, in reality you could not receive much injury to your reputation because of my plot; it was an innocent plot. Of course I confess that it had an appearance of guiltiness. At most, it must, be.

artifice which love contrived—and errors which love produces have ever been accounted venial. At least think it is punishment enough, that I have lost what in my heart I hold most dear, that to your cruel indignation I have offered up this beauty, and with her my peace and quiet; nay all my hopes of future comfort.

*Sir Wil.* An he does not move me, would I may never be of the quorum. An it were not as good a deed as to drink, to give her to him again, I would I might never take shipping. Aunt, if you don't forgive quickly, I shall melt, I can tell you that. My contract went no farther than a little-mouth glue, and that's hardly dry;—one doleful sigh more from my fellow-traveller and't is dissolved.

*Lady.* Well, nephew, upon your account. Ah, he has a false insinuating tongue. Well, sir, I will stifle my just resentment at my nephew's request. I will endeavour what I can to forget, but on proviso that you resign the contract with my niece immediately.

*Mira.* It is in writing and with papers of concern, but I have sent my servant for it, and will deliver it to you, with all acknowledgments for your transcendent goodness.

*Lady.* Oh, he has witchcraft in his eyes and tongue; when I did not see him I could have bribed a villain to his assassination; but his appearance rakes the embers which have so long lain smothered in my breast.— [*Aside*]

*Enter Fainall and Mrs. Marwood*

*Fain.* Your date of deliberation, madam, is expired. Here is the instrument, are you prepared to sign?

*Lady.* If I were prepared, I am not empowered. My niece exerts a lawful claim, having matched herself by my direction to Sir Wilful.

*Fain.* That sham is to gross to pass on me, though 'tis imposed on you madam.

*Milla.* Sir, I have given my consent.

*Mira.* And, sir, I have resigned my pretensions.

*Sir Wil.* And, sir I assert my right; and will maintain it in defiance of you, sir, and of your instrument'. 'Sheart an you talk of an instrument, sir, I have an old fox by my thigh shall hack your instrument of ram vellum to shreds, sir. It shall not be sufficient for a Mittimus or a tailor's measure; therefore withdraw your instrument, sir, or by our Lady I shall draw mine.

*Lady.* Hold, nephew, hold.

*Milla.* Good Sir Wilful, respite your valour.

accepted as a trick of lovers. I resorted to that trick only out of my love for Millamant, and a trick produced by love is always pardoned. At least you should think that it is enough punishment for me that I am going to lose what in my heart I hold most dear. Because of your cruel anger at me I have offered up this beauty, and with her, my peace and happiness ; more than that, I have sacrificed all my hopes of future comfort.

*Sir Wil.* If he does not move me, I may never be a Justice of Peace. If it were not as good a deed as to drink, to give her him again, I wish I might never go across the seas. Aunt, if you don't forgive quickly, I shall melt, I can tell you that. My agreement went no further than a word of mouth, and that is hardly dry. One more sorrowful sigh from my fellow traveller, and the mouth will be inoperative.

*Lady.* Well, nephew, it is because of you that I pardon him. Ah, but he has a false artful tongue. Well, sir, I will suppress my just resentment at the request of my nephew. I will try to forget what I can, but it is on condition that you renounce your affair with my niece immediately.

*Mira.* I will do it in writing and on legal papers ; and I have sent my servant for it. I will deliver it to you with all acknowledgement of your extraordinary goodness.

*Lady.* Oh, he has witchcraft in his eyes and tongue ; when I did not see him I could bribe easily a villain for his murder. But his very appearance awakens my old passion which was so long suppressed in my breast.

[*Aside.*

*Enter Fainall and Mrs. Marwood*

*Fain.* Your time for thinking, madam, is over. Here is the deed : are you prepared to sign over it ?

*Lady.* Even if I were prepared, I am not empowered. My niece exerts a lawful claim, having matched herself with my consent to Sir Wilful.

*Fain.* That trick is too obvious to fool me although it has deceived you, madam.

*Milla.* Sir, I have given my consent.

*Mira.* And, Sir, I have renounced my claim.

*Sir Wil* And, Sir, I assert my claim, and will maintain it in defiance of you, sir, and of your legal document. 'Sheart, if you talk of a deed, sir, I have an old fox (faithful sword) by my thigh which will cut your deed of sheepskin into pieces, sir. It shall not be sufficient for a warrant or a tailor's measure ; therefore withdraw your deed, sir, or, by our lady I shall draw my sword.

*Lady.* Hold, nephew, hold.

*Milla.* Good, sir Wilful, restrain your anger.

*Fain.* Indeed? Are you provided of your guard, with your single beef-eater there? But I 'm prepared for you, and insist upon my first proposal. You shall submit your own estate to my management, and absolutely make over my wife's to my sole use; as pursuant to the purport and tenor of this other covenant. I suppose, madam, your consent is not requisite in this case: nor, Mr. Mirabell, your resignation; nor, Sir Wilful, your right. You may draw your fox if you please, sir, and make a bear-garden flourish somewhere else: for here it will not avail. This, my Lady Wishfort, must be subscribed, or your darling daughters's turned adrift, like a leaky bulk to sink or swim, as she and the current of this lewd town can agree.

*Lady.* Is there no means, no remedy, to stop my ruin? Ungrateful wretch! dost thou not owe thy being, thy subsistence, to my daughter's fortune?

*Fain.* I 'll answer you when I have the rest of it in may possession.

*Mira* But that you would not accept of a remedy from my hands.—I own I have not deserved you should owe any obligation to me; or else perhaps I could advise—

*Lady.* Oh, what? what? to save me and my child from ruin, from want, I 'll forgive all that 's past; may, I 'll consent to anything to come, to be delivered from this tyranny.

*Mira.* Ay, madam, but that is too late, my reward is intercepted. You have disposed of her, who only could have made me a compensation for all my services;—but be it as it may, I am resolved I 'll serve you, you shall not be wronged in this savage manner.

*Lady.* How! Dear Mr. Mirabell, can you be so generous at last! But it is not possible. Harkee, I'll break my nephew's match, you shall have my niece yet, and all her fortune, if you can but save me from this imminent danger.

*Mira.* Will you? I take you at your word. I ask no more. I must have leave for two criminals to appear.

*Lady* Ay, ay, anybody, anybody.

*Mira.* Foible is one, and a penitent.

*Enter Mrs. Fainall, Foible, and Mincing*

[*Mirabell and Lady Wishfort go to Mrs. Fainall and Foible*]

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, my shame! these corrupt things are brought hither to expose me. [*To Fainall*]

*Fain.* If it must all come out, why let 'em know it, 'tis but the Way of the World. That shall not urge me to relinquish or abate one title of my terms, no, I will insist the more.

*Foib.* Yes, indeed, madam, I'll take my Bible oath of it.

*Minc.* And so will I, mem.

*Fain.* Indeed? Have you got your protector in that bulky-bodied Sir Wilful there? But I am prepared for you; and I insist upon my first proposal. You will surrender your own estate to my management, and absolutely hand over my wife's property for my sole use. I suppose, madam, that your consent is not required in this case, nor, Mr. Mirabell, your resignation, nor Sir Wilful, your right. You *may* draw your sword if you please, sir, and shout and fight elsewhere because here it will be of no use. This, my lady Wishfort, must be subscribed, or else your darling daughter will be turned out, like leaking ship to sink or swim, as she and the current of this wicked town can agree.

*Lady.* Is there no way, no remedy, to stop my ruin? Ungrateful wretch! Do you not owe your living, your subsistence, to my daughter's fortune?

*Mira.* I could help you, madam. But I know that you would not accept any solution from my hands. I own, I have not deserved that you should owe any obligation to me.

*Lady.* Oh, what? what? to save me and my child from ruin, I will forgive all that is past; not only that, I will agree to anything to come, only to be saved from this tyranny.

*Mira.* Yes, madam; but that is too late; I cannot get my reward—for Millamant is to be married to Sir Wilful. You have already disposed of her; she could make me a just compensation for all my services; but be it as it may, I am resolved I will serve you. You shall not be wronged in this savage manner.

*Lady.* How! Dear Mr. Mirabell, can you be so generous at last! But it is not possible. Listen, I will break the match of my nephew. You will still have my niece and all her fortune, if you can but save me from this imminent danger.

*Mira.* Will you? I take you at your word. I ask no more. I must have permission for two criminals to appear.

*Lady.* Yes, yes, anybody, anybody.

*Mira.* Foible is one. I must tell you that she is repentant for what she has done.

[*Enter Mrs. Fainall, Foible and Mincing*

[*Mirabell and Lady Wishfort go to Mrs. Fainall and Foible*]

*Mrs. Mar.* Oh, my shame, these wicked persons are brought here to expose me. [*To Fainall.*

*Fain.* If it must all come out, why let them know it: it is but the Way of the World. This exposure will not compel me to renounce even one item of my terms.

*Foib.* Yes, indeed, madam, I will take my Bible oath of it.

*Minc.* And so will I, mem.

*Lady.* O Marwood, Marwood, are thou false? my friend deceives me? Hast thou been a wicked accomplice with that profligate man?

*Mrs. Mar.* Have you so much ingratitude and injustice, to give credit against your friend, to the aspersions of two such mercenary t-ulls?

*Foib.* Mercenary, mem? I scorn your words. 'Tis true we found you and Mr. Fainall in the blue garret: by the same token, you swore us to secrecy upon Messalina's poems. Mercenary? No, if we would have been mercenary, we should have held our tongues; you would have bribed us sufficiently.

*Fain.* Go, you are an insignificant thing. Well, what are you the better for this! Is this Mr. Mirabell's expedient? I'll be put off no longer. You thing, that was a wife, shall smart for this. I will not leave thee where withal to hide thy shame: your body shall be naked as your reputation.

*Mrs. Fain.* I despise you, and defy your malice. You have aspersed me wrongfully. I have proved your falsehood. Go, you and your treacherous—I will not name it, but starve together,—perish!

*Fain.* Not while you are worth a great, indeed, my dear Madam, I'll be fooled no longer.

*Lady.* Ah, Mr. Mirabell, this is small comfort, the detection of this affair.

*Mira.* Oh, in good time. Your leave for the other offender and penitent to appear, madam.

*Enter Waitwell with a box of writings*

*Lady.* O Sir Rowland! Well, rascal?

*Wait.* What your ladyship pleases.—I have brought the black box at last, madam.

*Mira.* Give it me. Madam, you remember your promise.

*Lady.* Ay, dear sir.

*Mira.* Where are the gentlemen?

*Wait.* At hand, sir, rubbing their eyes, just risen from sleep.

*Fain.* 'Sdeath, what's this to me? I 'll not wait your private concerns.

*Enter Petulant and Witwoud*

*Pet.* How now? what's the matter? whose hand's out?

*Wit.* Hey-day! what, are you all got together; like players at the end of the last act?

*Mira.* You may remember, gentlemen. I once requested your hands as witnesses to a certain parchment.

*Wit.* Ay, I do, my hand I remember. Petulant set his mark.

*Mira.* You wrong him, his name is fairly written, as shall appear. You do not remember, gentlemen, anything of what that parchment contained? (*Undoing the box.*

*Lady.* O Marwood, Marwood, are you false ? have you been a wicked accomplice with that corrupted man ?

*Mrs. Mar.* Are you filled with so much ingratitude and injustice to believe in the false accusations of two such loose women, who, are hired against your friend ?

*Minc.* Hired, mem ? I hate your words. It is more than true that we found you and Mr. Fainall in the blue garret ; by the same token you swore us to secrecy upon Miscellaneous Poems. Hired ? No, if we have been hired, we should have held our tongues because you would have bribed us sufficiently.

*Fain:* Go, you are an insignificant thing. Well, what are you the better for this ? Is this Mr. Mirabell's device ? I will be put off no longer. You thing, that was a wife, shall suffer for this. I will not leave anything to hide your shame with ; your body shall be naked as your reputation.

*Mrs. Fain.* I hate you, and defy your malice. You have accused me wrongly. I have proved your falsehood. Go, you and your treacherous—I will not name it, put starve together, perish !

*Fain.* No, I will not starve till you are worth : till you have money for me to squeeze out, my dear. I do not like to be fooled any longer, madâm.

*Lady.* Ah, Mr. Mirabell, the detection of this is not sufficient enough to save me.

*Mira.* Don't worry, madam, everything will be alright in good time. I want your permission for the other penitent to appear before you.

*Enter Waitwell with a box of writings*

*Lady.* O, Sir Rowland ! Well, rascal ?

*Wait.* You may call me whatever you like, your ladyship.—I have brought the black box at last, madam.

*Mira.* Give it to me. Madam, you remember your promise.

*Lady.* Yes, dear sir.

*Mira.* Where are the gentlemen ?

*Wait.* At hand, sir, rubbing their eyes, just got up from sleep.

*Fain.* 'Sdeath, what has this got to do with me ? I will not wait for private business.

*Enter Petulant and Witwoud*

*Pet.* How now ? what is the matter ? who is losing ?

*Wit.* Hellow all of you ! Are you all up together like players at the end of the last act ?

*Mira.* You may remember, gentlemen, I once requested your hands as witnesses to a certain document.

*Wit.* Yes, my hand I remember. Petulant put his thumb.

*Mira.* You are doing him wrong, because his name is clearly written, as shall appear. You do not remember gentlemen, anything of what that document contained ?

[*Opening the box.*

*Wit.* No.

*Pet.* Not I. I writ, I read nothing.

*Mira.* Very well, now you shall know. Madam, your promise.

*Lady.* Ay, ay, sir, upon my honour.

*Mira.* Mr. Fainall, it is now time that you should know that your lady, while she was at her own disposal, and before you had by your insinuations wheedled her out of a pretended settlement of the greatest part of her fortune—

*Fain.* Sir ! pretended !

*Mira.* Yes, sir. I say that this lady while a widow, having, it seems, received some cautions respecting your inconstancy and tyranny of temper, which from her own partial opinion and fondness of you she could never have suspected—she did, I say, by the wholesome advice of friends and of sages learned in the laws of this land, deliver this same as her act and deed to me in trust, and to the uses within mentioned. You may read if you please—(*Holding out the parchment*) though perhaps what is written on the back may serve your occasions.

*Fain.* Very likely, sir. What's here ? Damnation ! [*Reads.*] *A Deed of Conveyance of the whole Estate real of Arabella Languish, Widow, in trust to Edward Mirabell.*—Confusion !

*Mira.* Even so, sir, 'tis the Way of the World, sir, of the widows of the world. I suppose this deed may bear an elder date than what you have obtained from your lady.

*Fain.* Perfidious fiend ! then thus I'll be revenged—

[*Offers to run at Mrs. Fainall*]

*Sir Wil.* Hold, sir, now you may make your bear-garden flourish somewhere else, sir.

*Fain.* Mirabell, you shall hear of this, sir, be sure you shall. —Let me pass, oaf. [*Exit*

*Mrs. Fain.* Madam, you seem to stifle your resentment : you had better give it vent.

*Mrs. Mar.* Yes, it shall have vent—and to your confusion, or I 'll perish in the attempt. [*Exit.*

*Lady.* Oh daughter, daughter, 'tis plain thou hast inherited thy mother's prudence.

*Mrs. Fain.* Thank Mr. Mirabell, a cautious friend, to whose advice all is owing.

*Lady.* Well, Mr. Mirabell, you have kept your promise—and I must perform mine. First I pardon for your sake Sir Rowland there and Foible. The next thing is to break the matter to my nephew, and how to do that—

*Mira.* For that, madam, give yourself no trouble. Let me have

*Wit.* No.

*Pet.* I too do not know. I wrote something but I did not read.

*Mira.* Very well, now you shall know. Madam, you have not forgotten your promise.

*Lady.* Yes, yes, sir, I do remember my promise.

*Mira.* Mr. Fainall, it is now time that you should know that your lady, while she was her own mistress, and not married to you, and before you could craftily secure a control over her estate—

*Fain.* Sir, what do you mean by craftily?

*Mira.* Yes, sir, I do mean it. I say that while the lady was still a widow, she had received some cautions respecting your inconstancy and bad temper. When she was warned, at the good advice of some of her friends, and also some counsels from learned men about the laws of the land, prepared this document and handed over this to me in trust, and to the uses as mentioned inside. You may read if you please—(Holding out the document)—though perhaps, what is written at the back concerns you in particular.

*Fain.* Very likely, sir. What is this here? Damnation! (*Reads*) 'A deed of conveyance of the whole estate real of Arabella Languish, widow, in trust to Edward Mirabell.'—Confusion. (Arabella Languish is Mrs. Fainall before her marriage to Mrs. Fainall).

*Mira.* Exactly, sir, it is the Way of the World, sir; it is in fact the Way of the Widows of the World. I suppose this deed bears a prior date than what you have obtained from your lady.

*Fain.* Treacherous monster I will be revenged in other ways like this— [*Offers to run at Mrs. Fainall.*

*Sir Wil.* Hold, sir, now you may shout somewhere else, sir.

*Fain.* Mirabell, you shall hear about this very soon from me, be sure, you will, sir.—Let me go, you idiot. [*Exit.*

*Mrs. Fain.* Madam, you seem to suppress your anger: you should better try to express it.

*Mrs. Mar.* Yes, it will be expressed—and it will be to your ruin, or I will perish in the attempt. [*Exit.*

*Lady.* Oh, daughter, daughter, it is clear that you have inherited the wisdom of your mother.

*Mrs. Fain.* You should thank Mr. Mirabell, a cautious friend, at whose advice I did all this and everything is saved to day.

*Lady.* Well, Mr Mirabell, you have kept your promise—and I must perform mine. First I pardon for your sake Sir Rowland there and Foible. The next thing is to break the matter to my nephew, and how to do that—

*Mira.* For that, madam, give no trouble to yourself. Let me have your consent.

your consent. Sir Wilful is my friend; he has had compassion upon lovers, and generously engaged a volunteer in this action, for our service; and now designs to prosecute his travels.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, aunt, I have no mind to marry. My cousin's a fine lady, and the gentleman loves her, and she loves him, and they deserve one another; my resolution is to see foreign parts—I have set on 't—and when I'm set on't, I must do't. And if these two gentlemen would travel too, I think they may be spared.

*Pet.* For my part, I say little. I think things are best off or on.

*Wit.* Egad, I understand nothing of the matter. I'm in a maze yet, like a dog in a dancing-school.

*Lady.* Well, sir, take her, and with her all the joy I can give you.

*Milla.* Why does not the man take me? Would you have me give myself to you over again?

*Mira.* Ay, and over and over again.—[*kisses her hand*] I would have you as often as possibly I can. Well, Heaven grant I love you not too well, that 's all my fear.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, you'll have time enough to toy after you're married; or if you will toy now, let us have a dance in the meantime; that we who are not lovers may have some other employment, besides looking on.

*Mira.* With all my heart, dear Sir Wilful. What shall we do for music?

*Foib.* Oh, sir, some that were provided for Sir Rowland's entertainment are yet within call. [*A dance*]

*Lady.* As I am a person, I can hold out no longer. I have wasted my spirits so to-day, already, that I am ready to sink under the fatigue; and I cannot but have some fears upon me yet, that my son Fainall will pursue some desperate course.

*Mira.* Madam, disquiet not yourself on that account; to my knowledge his circumstances are such, he must of force comply. For my part, I will contribute all that in me lies to a reunion; in the meantime, madam [*To Mrs. Fainall*], let me before these witnesses restore to you this deed of trust; it may be a means, well managed, to make you live easily together.

From hence let those be warned, who mean to wed:
Lest mutual falsehood stain the bridal bed:
For each deceiver to his cost may find,
That marriage frauds too oft are paid in kind:

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

Sir Wilful is my friend: he has had compassion upon lovers, and generously offered him-self to serve us in this action, and now he is ready to go on his travel abroad.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, aunt, I have no mind to marry. My cousin is a fine lady, and the gentleman loves her, and she loves him, and they deserve one another. My resolution is to see foreign lands—I am determined about that—and when I am determined, I must do it. And if these two gentlemen also want to travel, I think they may be spared.

*Pet.* For my part, I say little. I think things are best off and on.

*Wit.* Egad, I understand nothing of the matter. I am in a confusion yet, like a dog in a dancing school.

*Lady.* Well, sir, take her, and with her all the joy I can give you.

*Milla.* Why does not the man take me? Would you have me give myself to you over again?

*Mira.* Yes, over and over again.—(*Kisses her hand.*) I would have you as often as possibly I can. Well, Heaven grant I love you not too well, that is all my fear.

*Sir Wil.* 'Sheart, you will have time enough to make love after you are married. If you want to make love now, let us have a dance in the meantime so that we who are not lovers may have some other employment, besides looking on.

*Mira.* With all my heart, dear Sir Wilful. What shall do for music?

*Foib.* Oh, sir, some that were provided for Sir Rowland's entertainment are yet within call. (*A Dance.*

*Lady.* As I am a person, I can endure no longer. I have wasted up spirits so today already. Now I am almost to sink under the fatigue. I am still afraid of some eventuality, that my son-in-law Fainall will do something desperate.

*Mira.* Madam, do not trouble yourself on that account: to my knowledge his circumstances are such, he must bow down to you, because otherwise he has no means to support himself. On my part, I will do everything within my power to bring about a reunion. In the meantime, madam, (*To Mrs. Fainall*) let me before these witnesses restore to you this deed of trust; it may be a means, well managed, to make you live easily together.

From now onward those who wish to get married be warned that lest mutual falsehood, either of the husband or the wife, may damage the matrimonial relation, that each deceiver to his cost that he or she will be paid back in the same coin, that is, if a husband is faithless, his wife will also be faithless to him, and vice versa.

(*Exeunt all.*

## EPILOGUE

After our epilogue this crowd dismisses,
I'm thinking how this play'll be pulled to pieces
But pray consider, ere you doom its fall,
How hard a thing 'twould be, to please you all
There are some critics so with spleen diseased
They scarcely come inclining to be pleased:
And sure he must have more than mortal skill,
Who pleases any one against his will.
Then, all bad poets we are sure foes,
And how their number's swelled the town well knows
In shoals, I've marked 'em judging in the pit,
Though they're on no pretence for judgment fit,
But that they have been damned for want of wit
Since when, they by their own offences taught,
Set up for spies on plays, and finding fault.
Others there are whose malice we'd prevent:
Such, who watch plays, with scurrilous intent
To mark out who by characters are meant.
And though no perfect likeness they can trace
Yet each pretends to know the copied face.
These, with false glosses feed their own ill-nature,
And turn to libel, what was meant a satire.
May such malicious fops this fortune find,
To think themselves alone the fools designed:
If any are so arrogantly vain,
To think they singly can support a scene,
And furnish fool enough to entertain.
For well the learned and the judicious know,
That satire scorns to stoop so meanly low,
As any one abstracted fop to show.
For, as when painters form a matchless face,
They from each fair one catch some different grace
And shining features in one portrait blend,
To which no single beauty must pretend.
So poets oft, do in one piece expose
Whole *belles assembles* of coquettes and beaux.

## EPILOGUE

I am thinking how this play will be torn to pieces with severe criticisms after the audience has dispersed. But I will request you to consider, before you declare its doom, how diffieult it would be to please you with anything of the kind. There are some critics who suffer from bad humour: they are scarcely pleased with anything. And surely one must possess more than mortal skill to please anyone against his will. Then all the bad poets are definitely our enemies, the town people well know how their number is swelled everyday I have noticed them sitting in groups in the pit to pass judgement on the play But you know that on no group they are fit to pass judgment on a play. They should be condemned for their want of wit and humour, because they have been trained and taught to look suspiciously at any work of art and only to find fault with it There are other type of malicious persons too whose work is to find out similarities between the character in the play and possible person in real who has been thus characterized—that way their object is to abuse people. Of course, we can very well deal with this kind of malicious persons. Although they cannot find out any perfect likeness, they pretend to know the copied face, for whom the characters in the play stand. They elaborate their surmises with false commentary which shows their own ill nature, and try to slander what in fact was meant as satire in the play. I wish that such malicious people may be successful in finding out that they themselves have been represented as fools in the play. If there is any here who is so arrogantly vain as to think that they alone can support a scene, and furnish fool enough to entertain, I wish him success As for the learned and the wise, they well know that satire scorns to stoop so low as to depend on selected fool to do the job of satire. Just as painters when they paint a beautiful face, portray an ideal face, giving to it various elements of beauty found in different individuals, so poets, when they represent fools, combine in their portraits, different characteristics of folly found in a variety of fools in and around society.

# 22

## *Annotations*

### DEDICATION

*Ralph, Earl of Montague* : Ralph Montagu (1638-1709), created Earl of Montagu in 1689 and Duke of Montagu in 1705.

*prefer* : offer

*A Witwoud and a Truewit* : the would be wit, Witwoud, in *The Way of the World* and the genuinely witty Truewit in Jonson's *Epicoene*, or *The Silent Women* (1609)

*a Scipio and Laelius* : Scipio Africanus and Caius Laelius, patrons of the Roman comic dramatist Terence.

*fable* : plot

*Menander* : Greek writer of New Comedy.

*Theophrastus* : Greek author, whose characters had a marked influence on the character-writing of the seventeenth century.

### PROLOGUE

*Nature's oafs* : Nature's stupid children.

*cuckoo eggs* : referring to the habit of cuckoos of laying eggs in the nests of other birds.

*bebbles* : dupes

*buttered* : flattered.

### ACT ONE

*humors* : moods

*vopours* : a fashionable disorder indicating a depressed nervous condition.

*cabal nights* : private evening parties of a small group of intriguers.

*ratafia* : a cordial flavoured with certain fruits.

*last canonical hour* : twelve 'oclock (noon). At this date the canonical hours, when marriages might be legally performed were from eight to twelve in the morning.

***Pancras*** : St Pancras Church, where coupels might mary without licenses.

***Duke's Place*** : St. James Church in Aldgate, where marriages, sometimes referred to as Fleet weddings, could also be performed without licenses.

***Partlet*** : Pertelote, wife of Chauntecleer in Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale.*

***Rosamand's Pond*** : a little lake in the southwest corner of St. James's Park, around which Charles II planted groves, a resort of lovers.

***tender*** : have regard for.

***sifted*** : examined very closely.

***used*** : accustomed.

***a medlar grafted on a crab*** : a soft pulpy fruit grafted on a crab-apple.

***the monster in The Tempest*** : In Dryden and D'Avenant's *The Tempest* (1667), Trincola says of Caliban : The poor monster is loving in his drink. In the same play Sycorax, Caliban's sister, is also a loving monster.

***want*** : lack

***commonplace of comparisons*** : commonplace, or memorandum, book in which he records clever remarks which he has heard or read.

***le drole*** : the amusing fellow.

***spleen*** : low spirits believed to result from a diseased condition of that organ.

***bum-baily*** : a low type of baliff or sheriff's officer.

***parts*** : talents.

***cinoman water*** : a drink composed of sugar, spirits, powdered cinnamon, and hot water, considered an aid to digestion.

***trulls*** : prostitutes.

***S'bud*** : a contraction of the oath God's blood.

***rub off*** : clear out.

***roxolanas*** : Roxolana is the wife of *Solyman the Magnificent* in D'Avenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (Part I, 1656, Part II, 1661

***Harkee*** : a corruption of hark ye.

***conventicle*** : meeting-house of a nonconformist sect.

***trundle*** : roll along.

***your interpreter*** : Witwoud.

*Snug's the word* : Secrecy's the watchword.
*cabalist* : secret intriguer.
*by thee* : beside thee.
*demme* : damn me.
*worse than a Quaker hates a parrot* : i.e., because the parrot is so talkative.
*or than a fishmonger hates a hard frost* : i.e., because cold weather makes his work difficult.
*fobbed* : tricked.
*humorist* : one given to whims.
*the mall* : a fashionable promenade adjoining St. James's Park, now the street known as Pall Mall.

## ACT TWO

*free* : frank.
*transcendently* : supremely
*Penthesilea* : famous Queen of the Amazons, race of female warriors
*Alexander* : Alexander the Great, King of Macedon.
*oversee* : overlook.
*prevent* : anticipate.
*moiety* : half.
*of proof* : of tested strength
*S'death* : a contraction of God's death.
*mask* : a covering of silk or velvet, with openings for the eyes, concealing the upper part of the face and worn for disguise.
*interested and professing* : self interested and making a pretense (of friendship).
*privy to* : privately aware of.
*like mosca......terms* : In Jonson's *Volpone* (1606) the clever parasite, Mosca, threatens to expose his master if the latter will not give him half of his wealth.
*carry it* : carry on the business.
*what a butler could pinch out of a napkin* : ie. in a fancy shape for a dinner table.
*green sickness* : an anemic disease of young women.
*i' faith full sail* : In Dryden's *An Evening's Love* (1668) Wildblood says of Jacintha, as she approaches : "Yonder she comes with full sail i'faith."
*streamers* : flags, i.e., the lappets of her headdress.
*sculler* : single rower of a boat with two sculls, or short oars.
*perukes* : wigs.

*similitudes* : comparisons.

*a palpable hit* : an easily perceptible, effectively turned phrase.

*mem* : contraction of madam.

*la' slip* : i.e., ladyship.

*pecquet* : packet.

*tift* : patted and arranged (her hair).

*cremp* : cramp.

*crips* : a variation of crisp.

*card-matches* : pieces of cardboard dipped in melted sulphur and used as matches.

*easiness* : indulgence.

*assafoetiada* : gum resin used in medicine to prevent spasms.

*a course of fools* : a cure of fools, in place of medicine, for low spirits.

*watch light* : night light, or slow burning candle

*turtles* : turtle doves.

*O las* : Alas.

*Spouse* : Waitwell attempts to take from Foible the money which Mirabell has given her.

*B'wy* : contraction of God be with you or Good bye.

*jade* : hussy.

*attended* : waited for (with a pun upon waited on).

## ACT THREE

*Merciful* : Heaven (or God) understood.

*arrant* : complete.

*a person* : a person of distinction.

*mopus* : stupid person.

*Spanish paper* : a kind of rouge imported from Spain.

*changeling* : child secretly exchanged in infancy for a more desirable one, hence an idiot.

*bobbins* : small wooden pins, to wind thread about in weaving or sewing.

*brass thimble......nutmeg* : as good luck charms.

*Maritornes the Asturian* : an ill favored chambermaid who brings a jug of water to revive Sancho in Cervantes' *Don Quixote.*

*closet* : small room for privacy.

*Quarles* : Francis Quarles, a religious poet, author of *Emblem Divine and Moral* (1635).

*Prynne* : William Prynne, auther of *Histrioe Mastie* (1633), a Puritan attack on this stage

*Short View of the Stage* : In *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) the author, Jeremy

Collier, an Anglican clergyman, had included an attack on Congreve's earlier plays.

*Bunyan's works* : One volume of *The Works of that Imminent Servant of Christ* by Mr. John Bunyan, had been published in 1969.

*in worshiping...sin* : the worship of religious pictures in Roman Catholic Churches.

*fleers* : sneers.

*ods* : contraction of God's.

*drawer* : waiter.

*Locket's* : a fashionable tavern in Charing Cross.

*frippery* ; cast off garments.

*incontinently* : immediately.

*tatterdemalion* : raged fellow.

*Long Lane penthouse* : stall under an overhanging roof in Long Lane, where rags were sold.

*the million lottery* : a government scheme to raise a million pounds by the sale of lottery tickets.

*court...brithday* : Courtiers were expected to wear new and expensive clothes on the sovereign's birthday.

*Ludgate* : Ludgate Prison in Blackfriars, chiefly used for debtors.

*angle...mitten* : Debtors in Ludgate Prison were in the habit of begging alms of passers-by through a grating. By means of a mitten let down on a string from an upper window contributions could be drawn up.

*economy* : orderly arrangement.

*break decorums* : violate propriety.

*wants* : lacks.

*personate* : impersonate.

*months mind* : strong inclination.

*Mrs. Engine* : Mrs. Trickery.

*passe partout* : key that opens any door.

*driveler* : one who talks in a foolish way.

*orns* : referring to the horns which were imagined to sprout on the head of a cuckold.

*projection* : the final process of alchemy in the attempt to transmute base metal into gold.

*chaos* : utter disorder.

*olio* : hodge podge.

*fit* : fought.

*daily stuff* : a light, cheap woollen cloth.

*drap de berry* : coarse woollen cloth from the province of Berry in France.

*Rhenish wine tea* : strong wine instead of tea. White Rhenish wine was believed to reduce opulence and correct a high colour.

*I'll take my death* : I hope to die if what I say is untrue.

*discarded toast* : person whose health was formerly drunk.

*mind* : pay attention to.

*sybil* : prophetess.

*comb* : i.e., their wigs.

*in the main* : the mean, the middle or tenor part, with which the other two harmonize; also in the sense of mainly.

*battledores* : two who play with small rackets, as they strike a shuttlecock to and from each other.

*The ordinary's paid...psalm* : A member of the clergy was appointed to minister to condemned criminals.

*Barltemew and his fair* : Bartholomew Fair was popular fair held annually in Smithf ‹d on August 24, St. Bartholomew's Day.

*the Revolution* : the Blood‹ss Revolution of 1668 which brought William and Mary to the throne.

*belie* : probably.

*Oons* : a corruption of God's wounds.

*starling* : considered a very stupid bird.

*smoke him* : make fun of him.

*thereafter* : according.

*S'life* : a Corruption of God's life.

*S'heart* : a corruption of God's heart.

*Wrekin* : a high hill near the centre of Shropshire. 'All friends round the Wrekin' is a famous Shropshire toast.

*Odso* : a variant of Godso, expressing surprise.

*Flapdrogaon* : raisin snatched from burning brandy and extinguished by closing the mouth and swallowing, hence something valueless.

*hare's scutt* : a term still in country use for a hare's tail.

*Inns O' Court* : the societies in London in which fawyers are trained for the bar.

*salop* : Shropshire.

*Shrewsbury cake* : a flat, round, biscuit like cake. Shrewsbury is the country town of Shropshire.

*slabber* : slobber.

*a call of serjeants* : a group of sergeants at law who had been raised to that rank at the same time.

*Rat me* : an abbreviated form of May God rot me.

*Ods heart* : contraction of God's heart.

*before you were out of your time* : while you were still indentured to an attorney.

*Pumple* : i.e., Pimple.
*Furnival's inn* : a subordinate inn of court attached to Lincoln's Inn.
*gazettes* : news sheets.
*dawks's Letter* : a weekly newsletter.
*Weekly Bill* : the official publication of deaths occuring in and around London.
*bound prentice* : bound as an apprentice.
*the peace hold* : the Peace of Ryswick (1617), which had temporarily halted the war with France, was broken in 1701, the year after this play was first acted.
*at all adventures* : at all costs.
*shill I, shall I* : shilly shally, irresolute.
*'Tis like there may* : Very likely there is.
*rallier* : one who indulges in raillery.
*rally their best friends to choose* : make as much fun of them as they like.
*citizen's child* : Citizens were often cuckolded by fine gentlemen of the town.
*scruvy* ; contemptible.
*fond* : foolish.
*deputy lieutenant's hall* i.e., with numerous auntlers.
*cap of maintenance* : technical terms in heraldry, implying that being cuckolded with help to maintain him financially.
*away with* : endure.
*Pam...pocket* : Pam, the jack of clubs, is the highest card in the game of loo. Fainall implies that although his wife might have given up other lovers, she has an ace up her sleeve, i.e., Mirabell.
*composition* : agreement.
*appearance* : probability (of succeeding).
*drink like a Dane* : drink to excess.
*set his hand in* : start him.
*played the jade* : acted the part of a hussy.
*jealous* : suspicious.
*branches* : i.e., of the cuckold's horns.
*turn...grass* : turn her out to pasture.
*or pain* : either pain.

## ACT FOUR

*equipage* : retinue.
*pulvilled* : sprinkled with perfumed powder.
*levee* : rising.

*is set in to* : has set to work at.

*Ods my life* : a corruption of God (save) my life.

*There never yet...cursed* : the first lines of an untitled poem by Sir John Suckling.

*Thyrsis, a youth of the inspired train* : the first line of Edmund waller's *The Story of Phoebus and Daplus, Applied* .

*undergo* : endure.

a : a countrified abbreviation of she (more commonly he).

*I Prithee...toy* : These two lines and the three which Millamant next repeats constitute the first stanza of an untitled poem by Suckling.

*Anan* : a countrified expression meaning What ? or What say ?

*Gothic* : barbarian.

*fought* : a provincial form of fetched.

*Ah, l'ethordie* : Ah, the giddy town : some editors have emended to Ah, l'etordi, meaning Ah, the dolt.

*all a case* : all the same.

*Like phoebus sung the no less amorous boy* : the third line of the poem by Waller previously quoted by Millamant. Mirabell entering completes the couplet.

*curious* : complicated.

*things of common application* : affairs of everyday life.

*pragmatical* : matter of fact.

*after grace* : referring to the prayer concluding the marriage ceremoney.

*douceurs* : sweetnesses

*sommeils du matin* : morning slumbers.

*Fadler* : To faddle is to fondle.

*strange* : reserved.

*Imprimis* : in the first place.

*decoy duke...mask* ; a female confidante to coax a fop to hurry you, masked to the theatre.

*anticle* : stipulate.

*vizards* : masks.

*pig-water* : an ingredient in cosmetics.

*gentlewoman in What-d'ye-call-it Court* : referring to a seller of cosmetics.

*atlases* : a kind of oriental satin.

*billet* : small stick.

*Barbadoes waters* : brandy flavoured with orange and lemon peel.

*clary* : clary water, brandy flavoured with clary flowers and various spices.

*dormitives* : drinks to promote sleep.

*unsized camlet* : an oriental fabric.

*nolle prosequi* : a legal term for terminating the prosecution of a law-suit.

*whine it about* : spin.

*decino sexto* : a small sized book in which each sheet is folded into sixteen leaves.

*Lacedemonian* : Spartan. The Spartans were famous for brevity of speech.

*epitomizer* : one who states briefly the essence of a matter.

*Baldwin* : the name of the ass in the beast epic of Reynard the Fox.

*geniani* : a pair of twins.

*mustard seed* : A paste made from mustard seeds, with the addition of water and vinegar, was a pungent kind of seasoning.

*enow* : enough.

*conclude premises* : bring matters to a head.

*wood louse* : small insect found in old wood or under stones, capable of rolling itself up in a ball.

*flea dogs* : pick fleas from the coats of lap-dogs

*rantipole* : ill mannered.

*foh* : an exclamation of disgust.

*borchio* : drunkard. The term is derived from the Spanish word for winebag.

*gruth* : grudge.

*overtaken* : overcome.

*In vino veritas* : In wine there is truth, i.e., drunkards frankly speak the truth.

*pimple* : boon companion.

*antipodes* : the opposite side of the earth and its inhabitants.

*tallow chandler* : a maker or seller of tallow candles

*dry sinkard* : a stinking non drinker.

*Mufti* : Mohammedan priest.

*sophy* : the Shah of Persia.

*tumbril* : heavy cart.

*bastinadoed* : beaten on the soles of the feet.

*shake bag* : large gamecock.

*Salopian* : native of Shropshire.

*Tantony* : a corruption of St. Anthony, renowned for his triumph over gluttony. He was commonly represented in art as followed by a pig.

*retrospection* : act of looking back on the past.

*Year of Jubilee* : the year in which the Pope proclaims remission

of the punishment imposed for sin. The year in which this play was first acted (1700) was a jubilee year.

*tenter* : tenterhook.

*respect* : consider.

*save-all* : a device in a candlestick to hold the ends of candles so that they may be burned.

*camphire* : comphor, supposed to lessen sexual desire.

*incessantly* : instantly.

*washy* : watery.

*chairman in the dog days* : bearer of a sedan chair in the hottest part of the summer.

*Roman hand* : round and bold handwriting.

*character* : handwriting.

*baxom* : gay (the archaic meaning).

*arrant knight* : wandering knight.

*arrant knave* : downright knave.

## ACT FIVE

*weaving of dead hair* : i.e.. making wigs:

*traverse rag* : tattered curtain.

*bulk* : stall.

*frisoneer gorget* : woollen neckpiece or kerchief

*colberteen* : a kind of cheap place.

*governate* : housekeeper.

*cast servingman* : discharged servant.

*frontless* : shameless.

*put upon his clergy* : a Criminal who could read and write might escape sentence of death by claiming benefit of clergy, a privilege originally restricted to clergymen.

*meddle or make* : have anything to do with the affair.

*broker* : i.e., marriage broker.

*Abigails and Andrews* : waiting maids and menservants.

*Philander* : lover.

*Duke's place you* : marry you in a hurry, as at St. James's Church in Duke's place, notorious for irregular marriages.

*Bridewell bride* : a bride in Bridewell Prison, where women offenders were often punished by being required to beat hemp.

*compound* : make composition.

*naught* : immoral.

*sophisticated* : cor. oted.

*temper* : equanimity, composure.

*bodkin* : a pin shaped ornament used by women to fasten up their hair.

*brass counter* : coin of base metal used as a token of payment.

*stand by* : undergo.

*bobies* : dolls.

*made a shift* : used a trick.

*Oyez* ; Hear ye, a cry used by court criers to gain silence before making a proclamation.

*quoif* : white cap then worn by a serjeant at law.

*Doomsday Book* : the record of a survey of the lands of England made in 1085-1086 by order of William the Conqueror.

*fidges* : fidgets

*cantharides* : preparation of dried beetles used for medicinal purposes.

*cow itch* : a stinging tropical plant.

*revelers of the Temple* : law students of the Inns of Court.

*take notes, like prentices as a conventicle* : The apprentices of dissenting tradesmen were required to take notes on sermons for the benefit of their employers.

*the loud flounder man's* : A certain street vendor for many years distinguished himself by his forceful manner of crying flounders in the streets of London.

*overseen* : overlooked.

*Muscovite* : Russian.

*Czarish Majesty's retinue* : Peter the Great had visited England in 1698.

*non compos* : not in his right mind.

*while the instument is drawing* : while the document is being drawn up.

*her year was not out* : her first year of widowhood.

*with a witness* : the equivalent of with a vengeance.

*at this rebel rate* : in this high handed manner.

*Egyptian plagues* : referring to the ten plauges visited upon Pharoah, ch. *Exodus* 7-12.

*caterpillar* : i.e. vile fellow.

*in disguise* : intoxicated.

*Gorgon* : one of the three mythological sisters whose terrible aspect turned those who beheld them to stone.

*Pylades and Orestes* : Pylades was the devoted friend and travelling companion of Orestes.

*mum* : silence

*By'r lady* : By our Lady.

*O'the quorum* : one of the justices of the peace constituting of a bench.

*a little mouth glue* : an oral promise.

*fox* : a colloquial term for a sword.

*instrument of ram vellum* : legal document, written on parchment prepared from Sheepskin.

*mittimus* : warrant of arrest.

*respite* : delay.

*beneater* : a yeoman of the royal guard.

*bear-garden* : arena for baiting bears.

*Messalina's poems* : Messalina was the dissolute wife of the Roman emperor Claudius. Mincing, addicted to malapropisms, may have meant miscellaneous.

*graot* : old English coin worth fourpence.

*Whose hand's ovt* ? : Who is making trouble.

*off or on* : either way.

*I gad* : i.e, by God.

*toy* : play.

*of force* : necessarily.

# 23

# *Select Literary Criticism*

(1)

**Congreve's Art**

In discussing Congreve, then, it must be insisted that he belongs to the type of pure creator, who is to be judged solely on aesthetic grounds, that is, by the quality of delight which he imparts. He and Dickens are not to be measured by the same instrument, any more than Dostoievsky and Miss Austen, in spite of the elements they may possess in common. It is, when all is said, the province of art to delight the spirit, and it is, finally, the aesthetic pleasure we get from Congreve that earns him his high place. It is on that plain, and not on the moral or philosophic, that he has something to give. —*Bonamy Dobree*

(2)

**The Concept of Sex**

The rationalization of sex presumably means the establishment of a situation in which sex is not limited to the process of seduction, but seen as a normal part of life, and linked with respect for individuality, affection, care and concern. In Restoration comedy, the concept of sex resolves itself into statements about the sex war : they are saying either, 'I must have you, though I don'tcare for you', or, very occasionally. 'I am in love with you, but I won't admit it for fear you take advantage of it' ;......according to sex......' I want everyone to know' or 'I want no one to know.' The assumptions mentioned by Professor Knights...that wives and consistancy are boring, and that the appetite always needs fresh stimulus—serve to underline the narrow understanding of sex presented in the plays, are to contribute, as critical comedies, to the rationalization of sex, these conventional attitudes must be made ridiculous or offensive by the authors. In the bulk of Restoration comedy they have clearly not done this. Much as they protest that they are satirizing the life of the town, what they normally do is to praise the successful and to ridicule the unsuccessful in the particular way of life endorsed by the town. It is necessary to examine the comedies generally acknowledged as the best in the period to demonstrate this point of view : Wycherley's *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer*, Congreve's *Love for Love*, and *The Way of the World* and Etherege's *The Man of Mode*.

—*K.M.P. Burton*

(3)

### Congreve's Style

His style is inimitable, nay perfect. It is the highest model of comic dialogue. Every sentence is replete with sense and satire, conveyed in the most polished and pointed terms. Every page presents a shower of brilliant conceit, is a tissue of epigrams in prose, is a new triumph of wit, a new conquest over dullness. The fire of artful raillery is nowhere else so well kept up. This style, which he was almost the first to introduce, and which he carried to the utmost pitch of classical refinement, reminds one exactly of Collins's description of wit as opposed to humour.

'Whose jewels in his crisped hair
Are placed each other's light to share.'

Sheridan will not bear a comparison with him in the regular antithetical construction of his sentences, and in the mechanical artifices of his style.—It bears every mark of being what he himself in the dedication of one of his plays tells us that it was a spirited copy taken off and carefully revised from the most select society of his time, exhibiting all the sprightliness, ease, and animation of familiar conversation, with the correctness and delicacy of the most finished composition. His works are a singular treat to those who have cultivated a taste for the niceties of English style : there is a peculiar flavour in the very words, which is to be found in hardly any other writer.

—*William Hazlitt*

(4)

### Congreve's Detached View of the World

Congreve's estimate of the world is not different, but it is less bitter. No more than Wycherley does he believe in faith or honour. But he is less savage. He would perhaps, admire virtue and truth, but they hardly exist. One may if he likes lead a blameless life, but he need not expect others to do so. Nor is it necessary to get excited over the matter. Congreve watches the corruption of society with an amused detachment, and is resolved to be content if it is only graceful. Wycherley sums up his philosophy in the bit of dialogue just quoted. Congreve summed up his in a light song which ends :

"He alone won't betray in whom none will confide :
And the nymph may be chaste that has never been tried."

The judgements of the two men are closely akin, but where one finds indignation the other finds only amusement.

—*Joseph Wood Crutch*

(5)

### Congreve's Contribution to English Literary Criticism

From William Congreve (1670-1729), however, came certain hints regarding his practice, and they are worth recalling. Thus in

one place he states (in line with epic theorists) that he designed his moral first and then invented the plot ; that he observed the Unities to avoid confusion ; and elsewhere he defends his use of soliloquy, explaining that 'a man in a soliloquy is only thinking aloud', and that it was a means of communicating necessary information. Apart from this he explains that in his latest artificial comedy he had renounced the old satirical, didactic function of comedy for that of mere pleasure.

> Satire, he thinks, you ought not to expect,
> For so reformed a town who dare correct ?
> To please, this time, has been his sole pretence,
> He'll not instruct lest it should give offence.
>
> (Prologue to *The Way of the World*)

At the same time he claims to have achieved a new turn of style, the wit and sparkle of which he ascribes to his contact with 'the quality' though else-where he is conscious that an artistic selection of their conversation was necessary, since the mere reproduction of 'the extempore discourse of the two wittiest men on earth' would of itself prove ineffective. Moreover, his characters, he states, were designed 'to appear ridiculous, not so much through a natural folly (which is incorrigible and therefore not proper for the stage) as through an affected wit, a wit, which at the same time 'that it is affected, is also false.'

These, however, are but stray remarks let fall for the most part by dramatists at work, and when Congreve gives more formal consideration to matters of theory it is by way of reply to an earlier request of Dennis that he writes his letter concerning Humour in Comedy (1695). Here, however he is content to refine on the Jonsonian term, though in practice he had already abandoned the conventional formula for comedy. Thus humour, he explains, is neither folly nor wit, nor personal defect, nor mere affectation, not even the grotesque manners of a class, but rather a singular manner of doing or saying any thing peculiar and natural to one man only. In addition, he distinguishes between wit and humour, when he holds that although humorous characters need not be devoid of wit, yet such wit should not be indiscriminate ; and in order that characters might be consistently drawn he suggests that the manner of wit should be adapted to the humour. Apart from this, humour, he maintains, is a phenomenon that is lacking in women, whether owing to an excess, or a deficiency of passion : though, on the other hand he would agree that there was more humour in English comedy than in any other. In fact he would describe it as almost of English growth ; and this he held was due to the greater freedom enjoyed by Englishmen, a truth amply illustrated, he adds, by the old saying that he that will have a May-pole shall have a May-pole. It thus becomes plain that where humour was concerned, Jonsonian terminology still held the field ; that as yet there was no definite approach to its modern meaning ; and that Congreve here does little more than follow Temple's lead.

—*J.W.H. Atkins*

(6)

### Congreve's Plots

Congreve's plots have been the despair of his admires, and the plot of *The Way of the World* is no exception. In fact, the ramifications of the intrigues in *The Way of the World* are considerably more difficult to follow than those in *Love for Love* and only a little less confusing than those in *The Double Dealer*. The salient facts of the predicaments that must be resolved in *The Way of the World* are dropped allusively, almost casually, here and there ; and when the play is read, a hawk's eye is required to detect them and keep them in order. The close family relationships of the characters and their developing schemes are not easily remembered ; and when all threads have been untangled, it appears that nothing is really concluded. It is unlikely that the Fainalls will cease wrangling. Lady Wishfort will continue to hanker for a young lover. Mirabell and Millamant are apprehensive that the constancy for which they long may not be realized.

—*Kathleen M. Lynch*

(7)

### Congreve's Wit

Congreve dabbles incessantly in witticism, sometimes antithetical in structure, sometimes pungent in repartee, usually deftly humorous in its implications. If in the scale of being there had to be a maidservant called Mincing, she would inevitably announce dinner as Congreve makes her : "Mem, I am come to acquaint your la'ship that dinner is impatient." And her la'ship, who has "a mortal terror at the apprehension of offending against decorums," bravely trusts that "Sir Rowland" will not think her "proneto any iteration of nuptials". Verbal wit was perhaps Congreve's highest value, and apparently it was that of all his gentlemen fools (notof his servants), who aspire to wit but for whom it is, as Swift said "the lost language." For Congreve words danced with stately precision or with gay levity ; no English dramatic writer has surpassed him in cool intellectual mastery of diction. He was perhaps too subtle for his own good.

—*Albert C. Baugh*

(8)

### Congreve's Characteristics and Style

Congreve's appearance we know from Kneller's famous picture, Urbane is the word which best describes his temper ; he had, according to the gossiping Mrs. Manley "without the pride and affectation that generally accompanies, and always corrupts it." "Unreproachful" Gay termed him, and no doubt he was one of the most amiable of men. Lady Mary Montagu said that she had never met a man with a tithe of Congreve's wit.

*The Old Bachelor* belongs to an older genre. And yet, despite the fact that many of the characters are ancient stage properties, and more than one of the situations must have been well known to the

audience, the whole is treated with a freshness that lends new life and distinction. The technique, for a first play, is marvellously good. *The Double Dealer* stands on a higher plane. The comedy is more witty, brilliant, and natural, but the irony bites deep. Indeed, it was perhaps on account of this implacable satire that it received so little popular applause. The villainies of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood have seemed to some critics too abominable for comedy. With more justice, the repeated soliloquies of Maskwell, who enlarges on his treachery to himself, have been found a little heavy and unskilful. *Love for Love* stand next to *The Way of the World* in the list of Congreve's successes. His one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, deserves a high place in our drama. "It takes its place close after that is best in Otway and Racine." There are many passages of deep feeling: the action never drags; the speeches are never mere declamation. *The Way of the World* glitters with a frozen brilliance. In few plays is there art more consummate, wit more polished; in none is there less of human interest. The action is simply static; and until the appearance of Lady Wishfort in Act III., who for a brief moment infuses vigour and strength, we listen to conversations which, albeit delicately intellectual, in no wise lend themselves to any development of plot.

It was the fault of Congreve's age perhaps that he could not break from the restrictions of artificial comedy into those broader scenes of life and that wider outlook which raise Vanbrugh (inferior as he is in wit and technique) almost to a level with the author of *Love for Love*. Congreve has not the strength and audacity of Wycherley, but in his own mode and world he remains unsurpassed. He is claimed, and not without reason, to be the wittiest of all playwrights. His diction is limpid, pure, and exact, with a grace all its own. At times, perhaps, the reader is left with a felling that it is a little too exquisite, a little too rare; one looks in vain for a homely touch, an unpolished phrase. Hazlit has well said that Congreve's comedies "are a singular treat to those who have cultivated a taste for the niceties of English style: there is a peculiar flavour in the very words, which is to be found in hardly any other writer."

—*John Buchan*

(9)

### Restoration Comedy

The term 'Restoration comedy' is loosely applied to the plays written between 1660, and 1710, a period of fifty years. A period of the same length covered the whole range of Elizabethan drama from the work of the university wits to the closing of the theatres. The difference between Etherege and Farquhar is not as great as that between Lyly and Shirley, but it is nevertheless significant; and it is imoortant to realise the differences not merely between one dramatist and another, but also between the societies for which they wrote. The plays covered four reigns—Charles II, James II, William and Mary, Anne—and the greatest dramatist, Congreve, was not born when

Etherege's first plays were performed. At the end of the period, the climate of the age had completely changed. *The Tatler* began publication in 1709, and *The Spectator* two years later ; and before the end of the seventeenth century sentimental comedy had begun to oust the comedy of manners. Addison has been described, with some justice, as a forerunner of the Victorians. This means that the dramatists at the end of the period were not attempting to write the same kind of play as those at the beginning. There had been a reaction against the indecency and immorality of the earlier comedies and for this there was some justification if only because there had been some improvement in the morals of society.

For many years the complaints about the moral tone of the comedies had no apparent effect ; and the surprising success of Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) was due more to a shift in public opinion than to any merits of this curious book. Literary critics on the whole, have been singularly kind of Collier and most of them, led by Johnson and Macaulay, have assumed that he routed his opponents and that all the replies of the dramatists were feeble. Collier made a few valid criticisms. but the general tone of his book is intemperate and absurd. One can only assume that critics have praised Collier because they think Restoration comedy is immoral, and not for the strength of his arguments or for the beauty of his style. He seems incapable of distinguishing between a good argument and a completely irrelevant one. He does not distinguish between harmless oaths and real blasphemy, nor does he allow the stage to reflect the language of the age. He stigmatises Lady Forth's calling Jehu, a hackney coachman as profane—in fact he misinterprets the passage—and when Vainlove asks Belmour if he could be content to go to heaven and he replies, 'Hum, not immediately in my conscience, not heartily', Collier regards it as blasphemous. He complains that Lord Foplington (sic) laughs at the publick Solemnities of Religion, as if 'twas a ridiculous piece of Ignorance, to pretend to the Worship of a God. He discourses with Berinthia and Amanda in this manner : Why Faith Madam,—Sunday is a vile Day, I must confess. A man must have very little to do at Church that can give an account of the Sermon. What Collier fails to realise is that for a fool to dislike church-going is an oblique tribute to it.

Cynthia in *The Double Dealer* remarks : 'I am thinking that tho' Marriage makes Man and Wife one Flesh, it leaves them still two fools, Collier complains. This Jest is made upon a Text in Genesis, and afterwards applyed by our Saviour to the Case of Divorse. (Congreve showed that by leaving out a word Collier had altered the meaning). These are typical examples of the profanity Collier professes to find in the comedies he examines and it is not surprising that the dramatists were nonplussed.

Collier devotes one chapter to a matter on which he feels particularly keenly, that the dramatists satirise the clergy. This he regards as intolerable because of their relation to the Deity, because of the importance of their office, and because their function has been

in esteem in all ages, and countries. But, of course, a playwright has every right to satirise a hypocritical, time, serving or foolish clergyman.

—*Kenneth Muir*

(10)

**Congreve's Dialogue**

Congreve's last play, *The Way of the World*, was produced in 1700. It was written to please the author rather than the public. He put his best work into it, but it was a comparative failure, and he vowed to write no more for the stage, and scrupulously kept his vow. Many critics consider this play Congreve's best work and the best comedy of repartee in English; but it is marred by its imperfect plot and its somewhat inhuman atmosphere. The coquettee Millamant, however, is easily the most life-like figure in Congreve's gallery ; a woman of flesh and blood, unlike most of his two-dimensional puppets. Congreve lived twenty-nine years longer, but, practically speaking, wrote no more. He enjoyed various sinecures, and was so well liked that, even in those days of acrimonious party-strife, he was permitted to enjoy them irrespective of the vicissitudes of his party. He was considered as the leading English man of letters, and Pope did him the signal honour of dedicating his translation of the *Iliad* to him.

Congreve's chief strength lies almost entirely in his dialogue. It is beautiful, polished and dazzling ; its one weakness is that even his fools are masters of brilliant repartee. As a writer of good English, Congreve has few equals. Meredith says of him : "Where Congreve excels all his English rivals is in his literary force, and a succinctness of style peculiar to him. He had correct judgment, a correct ear, readiness of illustration within a narrow range, in snapshots of the obvious at the obvious and copious language. He hits the mean of a fine style and a natural in dialogue. He is at once precise and voluble. If you have ever thought upon style you will acknowledge it to be a signal accomplishment. In this he is a classic, and is worthy of treading a measure with Moliere". From the purely dramatic point of view, Congreve's comedies do not rank so high. His plots are at once elaborate and careless, his characters are not interesting, and there is something of an inhuman air about them. As a master of the comic spirit, Congreve is not to be compared with Moliere, but his good qualities in other respects invite the comparison.

—*R.F. Patterson*

(11)

**Restoration Comedy**

Restoration comedy, however, is a genuine reflection of the temper, if not of the actual life, of the upper classes of the nation; and as such it has a sociological as well as a literary interest. As practiced by Shakespeare, English comedy had been romantic in spirit. However seriously it had been concerned with the essentials of human nature, it had comparatively little to do with the circum-

stances of actual human life. In Ben Jonson and Middleton, and especially in the latest of the Jacobeans, Shirley, we find more realistic treatment of the setting, the social surroundings, of the play. Following their lead, and stimulated by the example of Moliere, the comedians of the Restoration devoted themselves specifically to picturing the external details of life, the fashions of the time, its manners, its speech, its interests. For scene they turned to the most interesting places they knew, the drawing-room, the coffee-houses, the streets and gardens of London. Their characters were chiefly people of fashion, and their plots, for the most part, were love intrigues, often borrowed from the French, both developed with clever dialogue. They represent the reaction of the playgoing public against Puritanism. They are antisocial, in that they represent social institutions, particularly marriage, in an obnoxious or ridiculous light; but they are not romantic or revolutionary. There is in them never an honest protest against institutions, never a genuine note of revolt. Conventions are accepted to be played with and attacked, merely by way of giving opportunity for witty raillery, or point to an intrigue.

The first of this school of comedians was Sir George Etherege (1634-1691), an Englishman who had been educated at Paris, and who there had seen the comedies of Moliere. Etherege was followed by William Wycherley (1641-1715), whose best plays are *The Country Wife* (1673) and *The Plain Dealer* (1674). Both are borrowed in outline from Moliere, but their moral atmosphere is that of the corrupt court of Charles II, where Wycherley was a favourite. William Congreve (1670-1729) was a far more brilliant playwright. His masterpieces, *Love and Love* (1695) and *The Way of the World* (1700), carry the interest of dialogue, of the verbal fence between character and character, to its extreme development.

Charles Lamb defended his delight in Restoration comedy on the ground that the world it represented was a "Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is a duty, and the manners perfect freedom." Macaulay attacked this view with the argument that Restoration comedy reflected accurately the world it represented, and that the world was morally reprehensible. A balanced view of the school of comedy supports neither of these positions. Restoration comedies are more or less perfect works of art and must not be regarded merely as escapes from the bondage of morality or as sociological studies. They furnish the judicious reader with legitimate moral holidays, even, though, in a world in which morality is constantly flouted, heroes and heroines are given a modest allowance of decency and virtue. With few exceptions, however, the characters are rakes or lights of love, but their wit is inexhaustible and their style irreproachable. No more brilliant comic dialogue exists than that of Congreve in *The Way of the World*.

It has been pointed out that one effect of the age that succeeded the Restoration was to organize society, to restrain the license of the individual. The antisocial influence of the plays of the time was clearly perceived, and protest was not lacking. It took time for the

protest to gather force, in face of the spirit of wild reaction against all that savored of Puritanism; but in 1698 a clergyman, Jeremy Collier, published his *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*, and Dryden, who was one of the dramatists particularly attacked, admitted the justice of the rebuke. Its immediate effect was not sufficient to do away with coarseness of Restoration comedy, which appears to the full in Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726); but an improvement is noticeable in the works of George Farquhar (1678-1707), the last of the school; and in Steele's plays the drama is in full alliance with the forces which were making for morality and decent living.

—*Fred B. Millet*

(12)

## Congreve's Achievement

*The Way of the World* is the apotheosis of Restoration manners comedy. Commonly criticized as badly constructed, it is actually a a remarkable demonstration of Congreve's technical skill as a playwright. A single reading of the play will, it is true, result only in bewilderment, for the relationships of the characters are complexly interwoven. On the stage, however, or on re-reading, the relationship straighten themselves out, and in their very complexity they are a symbol of the restricted society with which the play deals. Symbolic too are the three settings in which the action takes place : a chocolate house, St. James's Park, and the home of a lady of quality. These establish visually the limits of the world of the titl e: and, once the world is established, the action of the play never strays from Lady Wishfort's.

Usually production in the theatre can reveal a mastery of dramatic technique which is not observable on the printed page, but even the most casual reader cannot fail to admire the construction of the fourth act of *The Way of* the *World*. Here is a succession of comic scenes which for variety, point, and juxtaposition for climax can scarcely be matched elsewhere in the drama. Beginning with a satirical portrait of Lady Wishfort determining how best to greet her new "lover" (already known to us as the servant, Waitwell, disguised), it moves to the witty "provisos" on which Millamant and Mirabell expect to found a happy marriage, then to a procession of drunkards climaxed by the whole hearted farce of Sir Wilful, and reaches its peak with the long-anticipated meeting of Lady Wishfort and "Sir Rowland"

The act is more than a demonstration of skill in the raising of laughter. The juxtaposition of lady Wishfort's preparations for deceiving her suitor and the frankly outspoken provisos of the main characters is a statement in terms of the theatre of the theme of the play. The way of the world of chocolate houses, St. James's Park, and Lady Wishfort, is the way of deceit, of falseness and pretense, but it represents the only code established for the guidance of the inhabitants of that world. The play has exemplified, in Fainall and his wife, the behaviour of a typical married couple who live accor-

ding to the code in a relationship which is both undignified and unhappy. The proviso scene thus becomes more than more comic convention as point by point the lovers provide a reasonable basis for their marriage.

The critics of the play, whatever their attitude towards Restoration comedy as a whole, have been able to resist the spell of Millamant. She is a tease, a wit, a woman of the world, but she is chaste and determined to remain so. She is not perfect since she delights in the affectations and airs that grace a fine lady, but she knows her own value as an individual and she does not yield lightly to the persuasions of Mirabell. But having engaged herself to marry she does not stipulate for his guarantee of reform; rather she relies upon her own demonstrated powers of entirely capturing his devotion and his imagination. Mirabell, at her first entrance, unwittingly describes her in a parody of the terms Milton applies to Dalila in *Samson Agonistes*; "Here she comes, i' faith, full sail, with her fan spread and her streamers out and a shoal of fools for tenders." And Dalila she is, for she completely subdues the strongest of gallants into a "tractable and complying husband." Though it may be open to question whether she will, in her wisdom, ever permit herself to "dwindle into a wife".

Congreve has not discarded the conventions of Restoration comedy, but has adjusted them to his theme. The old and the foolish are burlesqued as expected, the country is despised, the usual humours exhibited, and the dialogue is full of similitudes true and false. The norms of conduct are not secondary but central figures in the plot, and the girds at marriage are directly related to the theme. Every incident, farcical, satirical, or simply humorous, has bearing on the main design, to establish a rational marriage contract. Marriage itself only represents the larger social contract which the Restoration had struggled without success to establish for a society without traditions. Millamant and Mirabell were intended by Congreve as symbols of a new order. But reason and wit are impossible models for the world in general, and the comedy of manners, like the more conventional railleries, was to be reformed by sentiment and not provisos.

*—Alan S. Downer*

(13)

**Congreve and the Comedy of Manners**

To appreciate all the artistic nuances of the new comedy, we must go to William Congreve (1670-1729), who twenty years later gave the English stage a series of masterpieces at once essentially perverse and essentially refined. It is to Etherege and not to Wycherley that Congreve is related by his *Old Bachelor* (1693), *The Double Dealer* (1694), *Love for Love* (1695), and *The Way of the World* (1700). He has neither the brutality nor the satirical violence of Wycherley. He depicts a self-satisfied corruption, enjoying its elegance and easily ranging itself with a licentious and egotistical society. He takes pleasure in making all his characters formulate

their own doubtful moral code. Congreve was a clear thinker and had at his disposal a most lucid prose, beautiful in the aptness of its words, the natural elegance of its phrases, the neat conciseness of its sentences, and its balance unemphasized by exaggerated symmetry. He dowers with this language such of his characters as are in sympathy with his temper, being of his world. Here is not only brilliant wit like Sheridan's, but words of distinction brought into the service of refinement of thought. A single one of Mirabell's saying will serve to display its essential quality: 'I had rather be his relation than his acquaintance.' This elegant perfection of expression is habitual with Congreve. It is the very fabric of his witty style, which is embroidered here and there with livelier arabesques and more vivid flowers, but never in such numoers as to conceal the ground. Moreover, it is supple, and although it makes plenteous use of picturesque comparisons, it maintains a sufficient distinction between the various characters according to their social position and intelligence. Its wit does dot grow tiresome in the end.

The ideas expressed by this wit are not in truth very edifying: virtue is only a lure, vices are mere trifles. Congreve's lovers are not perhaps more boldly outspoken than Rosalind bantering Orlando but we are much less convinced of their inner purity. An exception must, however, be made for the Mirabell, and especially for the Millamant of *The Way of the World*, the supreme achievement of the age in comedy. Congreve has succeeded in depicting a pair of lovers completely absorbed in the world, a man of free morals and a supremely couquettish woman, and yet giving the illusion of two hearts capable of true feeling, which beat for one another. In these two at least raillery and cynicism have not entirely killed all tenderness.

In the portrayal of elegance and distinction of manners, Congreve has no superiors, and it is doubtful whether he has an equal. His prose had affinities with verse, and produces in the reader an aesthetic emotion almost as great as that induced by genuine poetry.

—*Emile Legouis*

(14)

### The Theatre after the Restoration of Monarchy

Here is the apex of a cycle. Nothing gives greater significance to the courtly invasion of the theatre after 1633 than the courtly conquest of the theatre after 1660. It is not our purpose to chronicle the work of all the elite after 1660. We shall confine our view to those who were truly of the Cavalier generation; but we remember that all, Etherege, Wycherley, Rochester, Buckingham, Sedley, and the rest, follow the lead of Montague, Suckling, Carlell and those polite dramatists of the earlier reign. The courtiers of Gharles II pass through the breach made by the courtiers of Charles I. The lady dramatist also passes through the breach, following the valiant Duchess of Newcastle, so that by the end of the century the Mistresses Philiphs, Boothby, Behn, Trotter, Pix and Manley have swelled the female contingent of our English play-

wrights. To be sure, it was only during the earliest years of the new period that the courtier playwright was supreme. Through Lacy, Betterton, and Melbourne the actor-playwright regained a foothold; and in Thomas Shadwell emerged a contender for laurels with no glittering social background to lend his plays prestige. Toward the end of the century, gentlemen playwrights were somewhat uneasy, and William Congreve was not quite certain that writing plays was the best of form.

It is common to think of Restoration drama in terms of licentious comedy It is also common to attribute this licentious comedy to war weariness and reaction against Puritan bigotry. Without cavilling at the application of the term "Restoration" to drama written after the restored king had died and his successor had been banished by a second revolution, we must insist that the drama of the first years of Charles the Second's reign—literally the years of the Restoration—was not remarkable for licentious comedy but for serious romantic plays, highly moral and elevated, of the same general tone as those written by the courtiers in the circle of Henrietta Maria. The documents authorizing the revival of drama and licensing the companies were almost pietistic in tone. And the authors of these plays and of these documents were the Cavaliers—the men who had fought in the great rebellion, suffered imprisonment and the sequestration of estates, and had therefore, one would suppose, the chief reason to be war-weary and to react against Puritan bigotry. Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Farquhar were not yet born.

—*Alfred Harbage*

(15)

### The "Most Famous Scene" in the Play

The most famous scene in the play is that in which Mirabell and Millamant decide in a superbly civilized way, that they will get married. I shall not quote it, for it is almost hackneyed, but it is still well worth examination. The idea of the scene is not new, for many young couples in other plays of the period look at the question of wedlock, and look at it pretty coolly. Marriage is always a paradox—an attempt to put into rule that which is of its nature unruly, and to promise permanence without having any real idea of whether it will be acceptable, even tolerable. But behind all the glitter which these two epitomes of their age are wearing, there is good sense—a commodity rarely to be found in proposals. These two express what is, after all, the only possible formula for intellectual folk, as opposed to sentimentalists, or, of course, those who regard marriage as a sacrament: they insist on retaining their own identities after they are joined, and intend to continue to treat each other with as much politeness as they would strangers.

This scene is rightly the culmination of the play when it is acted but I wonder if the reader, who goes more slowly, and re-examines what he reads, is left with the feeling that this is the heart of the play, the thing that Congreve most wanted to say. One reader, at

least, feels differently. Lady Wishfort is a famous comic character, an ageing but still lustful woman, who hopes to taste again those pleasures which the world tends to think the prerogative only of the young and beautiful. Everyone knows her tirades before the looking glass, her wonderful flow of invective, a sort of intellectual Billingsgate, as when she drives out her untrustworthy maid, Foible, "Away! out! out! Go, set up for yourself again! Do, drive a trade, do with your threepenny-worth of small ware, flaunting upon a packthread, under a brandy-seller's bulk, or against a dead wall, with a yard of yellow colberteen again. Do; an old gnawed mask, two rows of pins, and a child's fiddle; a glass necklace with the beads broken, and a quilted night-cap with one ear. Go, go, drive a trade! These were your commodities, you treacherous trull! this was the merchandise you dealt in when I took you into my house........."

The passage needs a fair amount of annotation for the modern reader, which at once suggests that it is more colloquial, hence vital, in language and allusion than was common.

*—John E. Cunningham.*

# 24

# *Selected Critical Questions With Answers*

**Q. 1. What were the various reactions to Restoration Comedy? Discuss and make your own comments.**

*Or*

**Q. 2. The Comedy of Manners has been accused of immorality and obscenity. How for is this a valid condemnation of *The Way of the World*?**

**Ans.** The attack on Restoration drama was, to start with, part of the general attack on the theatre, which the solid citizenry of England always disapproved. Although Shakespeare's theatre was universal, in the sense that the audience came from all economic groups, it was still an iniquitous institution for many Englishmen. Gosson's *School of Abuse*, written in 1579, was primarily an attack on plays; Bishop Prynne (mentioned in Act III of *The Way of the World*) abused the theatre in the 1630's and lost his ears for his pains. The grounds of these attacks were many: the playhouses were dens of inquiry; the players were immoral; the hangers-on were profligate and apprentices were encouraged to play truant. Playwrights attacked religion, or morality, or portrayed indecent events, or used naughty words. Clergy were portrayed unsympathetically; vice was approved. Sometimes the plays were attacked on the more philosophical grounds that the entire pretense involved in acting was evil. The puritans closed the theatres as one of their first acts in office; Charles reopened them as one of his first acts in office.

By 1700 the attack was one again in full cry, this time in Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (also mentioned in Act III of *The Way of the World*.) The first edition appeared in 1698; others, enlarged and presumably improved, followed. The controversy continued for about thrity years. The point is, however, that the controversy about the morality of Restoration drama never ended, for the matter is still debated. Since the critics and moralists do not always talk of the same thing when they use the term immorality, it is worthwhile to consider some of its different meanings in relation to the drama.

A play may be considered immoral (1) because it contains immoral language or behaviour: (2) because the wicked characters are not punished; or (3) because the attitude of the dramatist is felt to be

immoral; he may not sufficiently disapprove what is presumably wicked, or sufficiently approve the good; he may make the evil cause more attractive.

The first two accusations may be answered by the statement that the author may be denouncing that which he describes; he may be disapproving strongly of immoral language or behaviour; and the fact that the wicked are not always punished may be his point—and precisely that which he deplores. Such plays are then immoral in one sense, but moral in another. As for the third accusation, one must consider artistic integrity. A work that may seem immoral by any standard may still be what this particular artist should write. On the other hand, an author may write a book where no immoral activities are described, where the wicked are punished, where no approval of vice is shown; and yet the book may be a complete lie. A deliberate falsification of the writer's own view of the world can be considered highly immoral.

The nineteenth century wrote about Restoration comedy with some difficulty. Charles Lamb thought that the world described was a fairyland, that therefore the behaviour described should offend no one, for it was not the behaviour of real people. His essay is itself interesting literature, but his case does not stand up under examination. Macaulay attacked the Restoration dramatist, especially Wycherley, for making vice attractive. But surely Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* does not make vice attractive. Frequently the attitude of the admirer of Restoration comedy is that he loves the plays despite their immorality, or, partly following Lamb, feels they are amoral; that is, considerations of morality do not apply to them.

It can be argued that the writer in a society cannot be amoral. And it would further appear that the term morality can involve so many distinctions that it cannot be usefully discussed. One might say, let the reader enjoy the plays, examine the artistry and artisanship, and ignore morality. Or better, let him try to read carefully and to achieve some empathy with the artist in the milieu in which he lived, perhaps thrived, at once an active member and artistic observer. The reader may then begin to have some feeling for the ambiguous and overlapping connotations of a title such as *The Way of the World*.

**Q. 3. Analyse *The Way of the World* as a delightful record of the artificial manners and morals of Restoration society.**

*Or*

**Q. 4. Examine *The Way of the World* as a Comedy of Manners.**

*Or*

**Q. 5. Assess the merit of *The Way of the World* as a Comedy of Manners.**

*Or*

**Q. 6. Consider *The Way of the World* as a perfect example of the Comedy of Manners.**

**Ans.** The Restoration Comedies belong almost exclusively to one type—what we call "society comedy" or the "comedy of manners." The scene is usually London, and the chief persons, with few exceptions, members of high society. If the country and city besides London is introduced, it is only for the purpose of ridicule. "The country is as terrible, I find, to our English ladies, as a monastery to those abroad ; and on my virginity, I think they would rather marry a London goaler, than a high sheriff of a country, since neither can stir from his employment", says one of the characters in *The Country Wife*, and the attitude is typical. The scene moves usually in a restricted circle ; the drawing room, the park, the bed chamber, the tavern, then the drawing-room again, through which scenes move a set of ever recurring types—the graceful young rake, the faithful wife, the deceived husband, and, perhaps, a charming young heroine who is to be bestowed in the end on the rake. Shadwell (who himself sometimes wrote very much the kind of thing he complained against) described the type in a preface to *The Sullen Lovers*. "In the plays which have been wrote of late," he says, "there is no such thing as perfect character, but the two chief persons are commonly a swearing, drinking, whoring ruffian for a lover, and an impudent ill-bred tomrig for a mistress and there is that latitude in this, that almost anything is proper for them to say ; but their chief subject is bawdy and profaneness".

It would be rash indeed to accuse any age of exceptional immorality because it made fun of marriage, since all ages apparently have done so ; but one can at least say that the dramatists of the Restoration worked this ever popular field more completely than had been done before. Since praise of marriage came to be one of the favourite themes of the later and reformed comedy, attention may be directed to the reverse here. If the pursuit of women was the principal business of life for the characters of these comedies, marriage was the most dreaded calamity, and that love was strong indeed which would submit to it.

Congreve represents the attitude of the period at its best. The scene is set in London. The comedy is concerned, as comedies have been through the ages, with love and money frequently complicated by parental opposition. His approach, however, is balanced ; love without money would be a problem ; but money without love, the cynic's aim, is not the goal. Likewise, Congreve abhors the sentimental attitude that love will result in the individual's somehow being submerged in each other ; he insists that lovers preserve their integrity as individuals. Love is not metaphysical, not sentimental, not a form of sacrifice. On the other hand, within this context, it is not merely carnal nor a thinly disguised lust ; it includes trust, dignity, and mutual respect.

The plays of the period represent the ideal of the Restoration attitude, intense yet balanced, their love based on mutual esteem with no surrender of individuality. Contrasted with it are Mirabell's earlier and quite ambiguous love affair with Mrs. Fainall, the illicit love of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, presumably passionate but wholly without mutual trust ; the spurious court Young Witwoud pays to

Millamant ; the direct and somewhat coarse approach of Sir Wilful ; and at the opposite extreme completely, the ageing and undignified longings of Lady Wishfort, vain, unrealistic over-eager, desperate, and a little pathetic.

The play also tries to focus attention on some of the values of London society. Everyone is engaged in intrigue ; Mirabell intrigues to gain consent to his marriage from Lady Wishfort, and this involves intrigue within intrigue, for he does not trust Waitwell. Fainall intrigues in turn. Everyone is involved in one or the other of these schemes—Mrs. Marwood and the servants. Even Lady Wishfort in her willingness to marry Sir Rowland has a devious purpose—revenge on Mirabell. When Mrs. Fainall married her husband, that was part of an intrigue, as was his marriage to her. And as we see in the play, victory goes to Mirabell, not because of his virtue, but simply because he is the most successful intriguer.

Certainly all these add up to the ironic commentary on society that is in the title, *The Way of the World*.

In our discussion we must make a special mention of the proviso scene (Act IV) in *The Way of the World* which is generally considered the finest in Restoration comedy. It is an emblem of the Restoration comic convention at its civilized best. At no time do the characters descend to any obvious display of emotion, let alone pathos. Even though in love, they conduct the scene with complete decorum. In the Restoration convention, in every exchange between a man and a woman each is trying to build his own ego. All encounters are duels and to be bested in the game of wits is to lose. The proviso scene is the reconciliation of these seeming irreconcilables. Mirabell will be husband, Millamant will dwindle into a wife ; but they have made a victory of their mutual surrender.

**Q. 7. "*The Way of the World* was not so immediately successful...... nor has it been ever so popular with audiences." Discuss the truth of this statement.**

**Ans.** The play *The Way of the World* was not so immediately successful as *Love for Love*, nor has it ever been so popular with audiences. It is not difficult to see why. The first act contains no action, and there is a great deal of discussion of characters we do not meet until later in the play—Millamant not appearing until the middle of Act II and Lady Wishfort, who provides the broadest comedy, not until the third act. Some allusions in the opening scenes are likely to be obscure or even misleading at a first hearing. When Mirabell, for example hints that Mr. Marwood is Fainall's mistress, the audience would have to be very quick on the uptake to take the hint :

"You pursue the Argument with a distrust that seems to be unaffected, and confess you are conscious of a Concern for which the Lady is more indebted to you, than your Wife."

It would be impossible for an audience to gather in Act I that Mirabell's uncle was an impostor, and that he was to court Lady Wishfort rather than Millamant. But such difficulties do not arise

after a first hearing, and may indeed give ironical undertones to the dialogue.

The plot certainly is a stumbling-block to readers of the play—though not necessarily to audiences—and this has led to an exclusive interest in the scenes in which the plot is of minor importance. Yet, as two recent critics have shown, this is likely to lead to a distorted undertsanding of the play. They argue that the theme of the play, implicit in the Horatian epigraphs, is the danger of losing fame and fortune through the exposure of adultery and that the plot is primarily a legacy conflict centering in Lady Wishfort and the four adulterers. This, and the contrast between Fainall and Marwood on the one hand, and Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall on the other, is as important thematically as the wooing of Millamant.

The play is fundamentally more serious than *Love for Love* and the dialogue and characterisation are continuously brilliant and more subtle. Congreve avows in his Dedication that he was aiming at greater subtlety :

"Those Characters which are meant to be ridicul'd in most of our Comedies, are of Fools so gross, that in my humble Opinion, they should rather disturb than divert the well-natured and reflecting Part of an Audience ; they are rather Objects of Charity than Contempt : and instead of moving our Mirth, they ought very often to excite our Compassion. This Reflection moved me to design some Characters, which shou'd appear ridiculous not so much thro' a natural Folly (which is incorrigible, and therefore not proper for the Stage) as thro' an affected Wit : a Wit, which at the same time that it is affected, is also false."

He goes on to complain that some of his audience failed to distinguish between a Witwoud and a Truewit.

This is a curious passage, for the only character to whom these remarks apply is Witwoud himself. Petulant can hardly be described as a wit ; Fainall is evil, but not affected ; Sir Wilful is rustic and unaffected . Lady Wishfort is affected in her speech and eminently ridiculous, but no one would think of her as a wit. Millamant is certainly affected, but no one could pretend that her wit is false. Congreve was attempting to rival Terence of whom he writes in the dedication—alluding no doubt to the defective taste of his own audience : 'The purity of his Stile, the Delicacy of his Turns, and the Justness of his Characters, were all of them Beauties, which the greater Part of his Audience were incapable of tasting.'

The characterisation depends less on exaggeration than it had in Congreve's earlier comedies, though even here, of course, 'the distance of the stage requires the Figures represented to be something larger than the Life. Lady Wishfort, indeed, especially in the Sir Rowland scenes, is a figure of farce, though not without pathos; and Sir Wilful's rusticity arouses sympathetic laughter. The scenes range from these to others which represent the high water mark of the comedy of manners.

In the opinion of Thomas H. Fujimura, whose book contains one of the best appreciations of Congreve, the comparative unpopu-

larity of *The Way of the World* was due neither to the slowness of the first act, nor to the weakness of the plot which is actually superior to of *The Old Bachelor*, 'but rather to the sententiousness of Mirabell.' He is the Restoration rake in the process of being transformed into a Wit of the age of sense and sensibility. His predominant characteristic as a Truewit is his judgment rather than fancy, and he is more addicted to sententiate than to similitudes. He is capacle of finely balanced phrases but his remarks are characterised by subtlety of thought and elegance of expression rather than by striking figures of speech. He is not so attractive a figure as Valentine, for the playful attitude of the Truewit is sobering into a concern with the sound conduct of life If there is a flaw in Mirabell, it is not his supposed cynicism but his sobriety.

**Q. 8. Discuss the types of drama on the Restoration stage with special reference to Comedy of Manners.**

(For answer see chapters 3, 4, and 7)

**Q. 9. Write a critical essay on the nature of Congreve's wit and humour in *The Way of the World*.**

*Or*

**Q. 10. Write a note on Congreve's wit with adequate illustrations from *The Way of the World*.**

**Ans.** Congreve avoids attempting any definition of wit, although, in the dedication, he distinguishes between true wit and false wit, the latter a product of affectation. Another comment of Congreve's on wit also casts some light on his practice. In "Concerning Humour in Comedy", he writes :

"Every person in a comedy may be allowed to speak them (pleasant things) From a witty man they are expected and even a fool may be permitted to stumble on 'em by chance...I do not think that humorous characters exclude wit ; no, but the manner of wit should be adapted to the humour... a character of a splenetic and peevish humour should have a satirical wit. A jolly and sanguine humour should have a facetious wit."

In practice all of Congreve's characters speak "pleasant things". There is not a speech that does not have its biting edge of wit, satire, or irony.

Discussions of style and wit in a play are in some ways simple. Certain kinds of problems do not have to be discussed, since they do not exist. Unlike novels, plays have no long passages of description which may or may not be well written ; there are no elaborate expositions of motives. There is no reason to consider whether the author is inside his creature's minds or external to them. The characters speak ; what they say can be examined. To talk of style or wit in a play is to talk of the different styles and different kinds of wit of the characters.

Mirabell's style is not an easy one. We do not feel that he is spontaneous for his periods are carefully prepared. The sentences are long, flowing, and syntactically intricate. He indulges in no slang or canting expressions. While he can be acid in his judgment,

there is no vituperation in his speech. The objects of his disapproval are so deftly lanced in his gracious phrases that they can scarcely feel the knife.

Mirabell's wit and irony are also intricate. His observations about others are shrewd, including a mixture of distaste, tolerance and amusement. Considerable irony is also directed at himself. There is a strong element of self criticism that makes him a most unusual hero.

Any number of speeches might serve to reveal these characteristics; this famous speech from the first act about his feelings toward Millamant will do:

"I'll tell thee, Fainall, she once used me with that insolence, that in revenge I took her to pieces, sifted her and separated her failings. I sudied 'em, and got 'em by rote. The catalogue was so large that I was not without hopes one day or other to hate her heartily: to which end I so used myself to think of 'em, that at length, contrary to my design and expectation, they gave me every hour less and less disturbance, and in a few days it became habitual to me to remember 'em without being displeased. They are now grown as familiar to me as my own frailties, and, in all probability, in a little time longer I shall like 'em as well."

The characteristics can be seen from the long smooth passages: the ready wit, the clear vision of the object of the speech, and the wry ability to laugh at himself.

The ultimate proof of the individuality of Millamant's style is in this—that to read the passage aloud is immediately to sense the manner and mannerisms of the character. She is flippant, delightfully spoiled, gay. When in the fourth act, she reveals a depth that we might not have expected, that, too, is in the style. Her speech in her first appearance is abrupt; she moves not so much from one subject to another as from one feeling to another with an ability to turn anything into wit.

After a series of short, flippant ejaculations, there comes an inspired thought: "They serve one to pin up one's hair." She then pursues the train of thought that this conceit suggests: "Only with those in verse." It is incidentally pleasant that Mincing can pick up her cue and proceed further.

The passage "One makes lovers as fast as one pleases..." is similar, as is "Now I think on't, I'm angry. No, now I think on't, I'm pleased; for I believe I gave you some pain". The style and wit are the character of Millamant.

Fainall's style and wit must be differentiated from Mirabell's. His sentences are not as long or as contemplative as Mirabell's. His wit is more direct and somewhat crueler. The coldness of a losing gamester lessens the pleasure of the winner. "I'd no more play with a man that slighted his ill fortune than I'd make love to a woman that undervalued the loss of her reputation." Perhaps because of the nature of his part he is more abrupt in accusation, and his lines may depend on a more obvious parallelism and antithesis." Could you think, because the nodding husband would not wake,

that e'er the watchful lover slept ?" And he engages in a more direct attack : "Professed a friendship ! Oh, the pious friendships of the female sex !"

Since Congreve himself commented that readers and audience could not always distinguish between Witwoud and his true wits, Witwoud's speeches demand especially careful examination.

As Witwoud has no function in the plot of the play, the purpose of speeches is to characterize him and to provide comedy. The key to his wit is the similitude. "Truce with your similitudes", says Millamant to him. Each comparison may be clever by itself, amusing, unusual, a little shocking, "such as Friendship without freedom is as dull as love without enjoyment." The lines with which he interrupts Millamant in the second act are each one a comparison, amusing or overburdened. The witticisms are forced ; they have been collected and memorized, and at need pulled out of his conjurer's bag of tricks. Irony, if there is any here, is superficial ; no one of the witticisms has any particular point. Nor does Young Witwoud even realize it should.

Petulant's style and wit are included in his name. He has a humour to be angry—that is, he is an example of Jonsonian humour, or, perhaps, he affects a humour.

Lady Wishfort's style, like everything else about her, is of special interest. Her manner is abrupt—a mirror of the arbitrary, petty tyrant she is. Like all Congreve characters, she has, perhaps unconsciously, a fair amount of wit. More than anything else in the play her verbal attack on others is direct vituperation..."Boudoir Billingsgate," in Meredith's phrase. No unit of thought is longer than a few words. It is clear that she shouts when annoyed or irritated, and she is always in a state of annoyance :

"No, fool. Not the ratafia, fool. Grant me patience ! I mean the Spanish paper, idiot ; complexion, darling. Paint, paint, paint ! dost thou understand that, changeling, dangling thy hands like babbins before thee ? Why does thou not stir, puppet ? thou wooden thing upon wires !"

**Q. 11. Discuss what you might consider the structural faults in Congreve's handling of the plot and counterplots in *The Way of the World*.**

*Or*

**Q. 12. "The plot of *The Way of the World* is intricate, yet perhaps a little lacking in coherence and strength." Discuss.**

**Ans.** Because of its striking characterization and brilliant dialogue, *The Way of the World* is generally considered to be the finest example of Restoration comedy, as well as one of the last. Nevertheless it was not successful when it was first presented in 1700. Although the English audiences, unlike the French, were accustomed to plots and subplots and to a great deal of action in their plays, they were confused by the amount of activity crammed into a single day. *The Way of the World* had only a single action to which

everything was related, but it included a scheme, and a counterplot to frustrate the scheme, and then moves to foil the counterplot. There were too many episodes, events, reversals, and discoveries, most of them huddled in the last acts, and they demanded too much of the audience. If the difficulty was ever overcome in a performance, it was only when actors and director were completely conscious of their problem.

Although there seems to be the usual happy ending to this comedy *The Way of the World* leaves a number of loose ends that add to the confusion :-

1. It is difficult to see where Mrs. Fainall's future is satisfactorily resolved. At one point in Act V she says that this is the end of her life with Fainall ; that is one comfort. But at the end of the play it seems that she will continue to live with Fainall in an obviously very awkward domestic situation.

2. It is not clear that Fainall is completely foiled. He could still demand control of Lady Wishfort's fortune, or disgrace her daughter Mirabell's statement that "his circumstances are such, he (Fainall) must of force comply" is hardly adequate.

3. Some problems of motivation in the play are not clear. Why did't Mirabell himself marry Mrs. Fainall when she was a widow ? Mirabell is not wealthy, and Mrs. Fainall apparently inherited a considerable fortune from her first husband.

4. Is the affair between Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall at an end ? She married Fainall only to forestall scandal if she became pregnant. If it is at an end, why has it ceased ? Why should she help Mirabell with his wooing of Millamant ? Has he perhaps convinced Mrs. Fainall that he is marrying for money ?

5. Apparently Mirabell had wanted to marry Millamant the year before but the match was forestalled by Mrs. Marwood's interference. Fainall suggests that, had they married, Millamant would have lost half her fortune. Why then the elaborate plot now, to save the 6,000 pounds that Mirabell was prepared to sacrifice before ?

There are no real answers to the questions. They seem to be loose ends that the dramatist never bothered to tie together.

Every play must start, in the traditional phrase, in *medias res* ; that is, some events have occurred before the opening curtain. The devices, called expositon, used to inform the audience or reader of these events could be as obvious as a character addressing the audience directly or could be an important part of the action, as in Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* or in Ibsen's plays, or in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. In Restoration drama, exposition was usually straightforward ; two characters might meet and gossip, or a man might talk to a servant ; but in *The Way of the World* exposition is highly ingenious and long withheld. In Act I we are told that Mirabell is in love and that there are obstacles to the courtship, but most of the significant facts are hidden until Act II, so that he first par the play is obscure. Then, just as Mirabell's scheme

becomes clear, it loses significance, for Fainall's counterplot becomes the machinery that moves the action forward.

**Q. 13 "Audiences love Millamant with all her faults, and even for her faults". Do you agree ?**

**Ans.** Audiences, like Mirabell, love Millamant with all her faults, and even for her faults. In this they are wiser than some of the critics. Professor L. C. Knights, in his famous attack on Restoration Comedy, spoke of Millamant in a way which seems to exhibit a misunderstanding of what Congreve was doing, as well as an imperfect understanding of the characters. He complains that she expects to draw vitality from the excitement of incessant solicitation; that she shares with unattractive characters a disproportionate belief in the pleasure of a chase, and that her way of life is never for a moment enlivened by the play of genuine intelligence.

As we see, Mirabell—and Congreve too—is aware of Millamant's faults. But, oddly enough, none of the faults listed by Knights can reasonably be ascribed to her. It is necessary, for example, to realise why she wishes not to be freed from the agreeable Fatigues of Solicitation. She lives in a society in which constancy is regarded as a bore, and in which marriage ends in disillusionment. She wishes to avoid what Swift's Stella was to described as the common lot of women :

> Before the thirti'th year of life,
> A maid forlorn, or hated wife.

Hazlitt thought Millamant was nothing but a fine lady, and Meredith said she was a type of the superior ladies who do not think. Both critics are surely mistaken. Millamant's wit, like that of Rosalind and Beatrice, is a sign of intelligence ; and although affectation and coquetry usually indicate a frigid temperament, Millamant's affectation is the cloak of affectation, and her coquetry conceals a nature capable of a whole-hearted love. She can act the fine lady to perfection, she can pose as a woman who makes wit the be all and end all of her life, but fundamentally she is a sensitive girl in an insensitive society.

As Fujimura says : "her whimsical wit is a shield she holds up against the world...In addition to her judgment and sense. Mrs. Millamant has a real capa- city for deep feeling, and her love for Mirabell is all the more impressive because she has such a mastery over it."

That Millamant is genuinely in love, and not a coquette is made perfectly clear when, just after the bargaining scene, she confesses to her friend : "Well, if Mirabell shou'd not make a good Husband, I am a lost thing—for I find I love him violently."

Angelica, the most philosophical or Congreve's heroines, and without any of the affectations of Belinda or Millamant, refers obliquely to her fear of disillusionment, when she tells Valentine, who has been feigning madness :

"Wou'd any thing, but a Madam, complain of Uncertainty ?

Uncertainty and Expectation are the Joys of Life. Security is an insipid thing and the overtaking and possessing of a Wish, discovers the Folly of the Chase. Never let us know one another better: for the pleasure of a Masquerade is done, when we come to show our Faces."

It is in *The Way of the World* that the fear of disillusionment in marriage is treated most fully. Such fear has been expressed by some of Shakespeare's heroines—by Rosalind, for example, when in the guise of Ganymede she tells Orlando: "Men are April when they woo December when they wed." But what in Rosalind is just a joke, in Millamant becomes almost her dominant mood. The manners of society determine the nature of the comedy: and in the play in which Millament appears the example of Mrs. Fainall or Mrs. Marwood is not encouraging to anyone who would embark on the dangerous seas of matrimony, even though Millamant confesses, though not to Mirabell, that she loves him violently. Because of her fears, Millamant makes Mirabell agree not to use endearments and to behave in public as if they were not married at all.

But the most subtle way by which Millament conveys her anxiety on the very verge of matrimony is by her quotations from Waller and Suckling. Congreve was not entirely original in his method. Belinda's quotation is a means of characterising her—"Oh Gad I have a great Passion for Cowley...Ah so fine! So extremely fine! So every thing in the World that I like"—and Etherege made his Dorimant copy Rochester's trick of quoting Waller. But, as Bonamy Dobree pointed out, though he suggested that Congreve was expecting too much from his audience, all Millament's quotations are concerned with the disadvantages of fruition. Almost all the cavalier poets wrote poems in praise of platonic love and against fruition. Lord Herbert wrote that strong passion in youth 'is not yet affectation, but disease' and in another poem he refrains from pressing his suit lest his mistress should afterwards regret her compliance.

Moreover, it must be noted that all the poems in the play are written from the masculine point of view and it is a curious result of libertinism that they should all be opposed to fruition. The reason, as we have seen, is that the poets believe that desire dies with its satisfaction; and this accounts for the ambivalent feelings about marriage the heroes of many Restoration comedies have and also the reluctance of the more sensitive heroines to risk disillusionment. Millamant, moreover, knows that her cousin is Mirabell's cast off mistress, and that she is treated badly by her husband. In the society of her time, and according to the way of the world, she has reason to fear. It may be added, in view of Knight's statement, that the aptness of Millamant's quotations is enough to prove that she had genuine intelligence, and that she was a match for Mirabell, the character in all Congreve's plays which comes closest to being a self portrait.

**Q. 14. Discuss humours and affectation in the characters in *The Way of the World*.**

**Ans**. In an essay, "Concerning Humour in Comedy," written in 1696,Congreve said :

"There is more of humour in our English comic writers than in any others. I do not at all wonder at it, for I look upon humour to be almost of English growth......and what appears to me to be the reason of it is the greater freedom, privilege, and liberty which the common people of England enjoy."

The last part of this noble sentiment has its own special interest but the heart of the statement is the word humour. The term as used here does not have its current meaning of the amusing or comic. The concept of the humorous character, the man whose disposition was governed by his type of bodily fluid, was developed most clearly by Ben Jonson. By the time of Congreve no one took seriously the physiological basis of the concept. To distinguish between the two meanings, we are here following a common convention : the English spelling humour is used to refer to the Jonsonian charac- ter: the American, humour if the current meaning of comic is intended.

Looking at the practice of his time, Congreve defined the humour thus :

"A singular and unavoidable manner of doing or saying any-thing, peculiar and natural to one man only, by which his speech and actions are distinguished from those of other men."

Key words to note here are unavoidable manner, natural, and one man only. In practice, humour characters in plays were usually comic, the butt of satire on the author's part, although they were not always treated unsympathetically. The two humours in this plav are Lady Wishfort and Sir Wilful Witwoud.

Lady Wishfort is a character type with a long tradition in drama, the over eager man-seeking widow. Her first offence, and that which initially makes her an object of ridicule, is the breach of taste, for she should know better. She is first described by Mirabell who points out that her character is defined in the tag-name, Lady Wishfort. She is fifty five years of age, an age that certainly seemed very old to the preconscious and brilliant thirty year old whose play was being produced. She is also the character with most lines in the final acts of the play.

Her vanity is made clear from the first. She misinterpreted Mirabell's flattery, which he describes in the first act. In the third act the picture of Lady Wishfort at her toilet ridicules the woman who does not accept the fact of her age gracefully. Her indecorous interest in men is a part of her character and importanr for the action. It is the reason she can misinterpret Mirabell, and the reason Mirabell can hope that Waitwell's wooing may be successful.

As a woman who controls considerable wealth, she is accustomed to have her own way; she is abrupt and tyrannical with her maid; she plans her ward's marriage. It is clear she does not like to be crossed and does not expect to be.

Congreve has probed this character further. Her vanity and man chasing both have a common source; she lives in a world of

fantasy. She looks into mirrors constantly but does not see that everyone else sees. In her mind she can still be a girl of sixteen or a beautiful young woman. She is, therefore, especially susceptible to flattery, for there is no touch of good sense to help her see through it. Because of her susceptibility to flattery, her friends are always ill-chosen. Everyone she trusts betrays her to a greater or lesser degree; apparently her closest friend is Mrs. Marwood; her daughter and ward are both prepared to go along with a plot that would trick her in a most humiliating way; her maid, Foible; on whom she depends, plays a major part in the plot. In her dilemma in the last act she is bewildered and helpless.

The humorous character is not often shown in situations that display aspects of his character other than his humour. However, Lady Wishfort as mother and guardian has a depth beyond the usual for her type. As a mother she did not always act wisely :

"She (her daughter) was never suffered to play with a male child...nay, her very babies (dolls) were of the feminine gender. Oh, she never looked a man in the face but her own father, or the chaplain, and him we made a shift to put upon her for a woman, by the help of his long garments and his sleek face......"

Yet Fainall's demands could prove successful only because she loves her daughter and wants to protect her. Her choice of a husband for her ward might be incongruous, but it is certainly well intentioned. Sir Wilful does have sterling qualities, although he is hardly the right choice for Millamant.

The result is that Lady Wishfort, by the end of the play, has gained a certain measure of good will from the audience. She is, a complex creation, the butt of the author's satire and actors' ridicule, yet the object of some painful sympathy.

The country bumpkin, as butt of the city wit, is a traditional character type in comedy. Like other characters in the play, Sir Wilful does not quite conform to type. He is shown as having country manners : he calls for slippers. he drinks too heavily; he is very shy with Millamant, awed by the city lady. However, his intention to tour Europe even though he is well beyond the usual age for the grand tour, is an odd characteristic, not observable in the type. He is justifiably angry in his encounter with his brother. His attitude in other matters suggests a sensible person; he certainly does not wish to marry Millamant if she does not choose; he obviously likes Mirabell presumably a sign of good judgment, and gladly helps to foil Fainall.

The two fops in the play have little part in the action. They serve only to indicate Millamant's train of suitors. The basis for these characters is also to be found in views of human nature that make up part of the attitude of the period. In *Concerning Humour in Comedy*, the same essay in which Congreve discusses the humours, he discusses affection. Affectation, he feels, is often mistaken for humour and he draws this distinction: "Nothing is more common than for some to affect particular way of saying and doing things peculiar to others whom they admire and would imitate." This

might well be the key to Young Witwoud. "He that draws a character of affectation, shows humour at the second hand; he at best but publishes a translation, and his pictures are but copies." Here may be the key to Petulant. Congreve continues to draw his distinctions, and they bear repeating :

> Humour is from nature, habit from custom, and affectation from industry.
>
> Humour shows as we are.
>
> Habit shows us as we appear under a forcible impression.
>
> Affectation shows what we would be under a voluntary disguise.
>
> Though here I would observe by the way that continued affectation may in time become a habit.

Presumably young Witwoud came to London from the country recently to study law. He took to London life enthusiastically, but not always wisely. He thinks of himself as a wit, but his judgment is not sound. He serves as a contract to Mirabell : he is the false picture, the affectation of the Restoration ideal, which Mirabell represents.

Although somewhat forced, his lines are typical Restoration wit :

"Fainall, how does your lady ?...I beg pardon that I should ask a man of pleasure and the town a question at once so foreign and domestic......"

"A wit should no more be sincere than a woman constant ; one argues a decay of parts, as t'other of beauty."

He is thus characterized by Mirabell :

"He is a fool with a good memory and some few scraps of other folks wit. He is one whose conversation can never be approved ; yet it is now and then to be endured."

He is also so anxious to appear to understand raillery that he does not realize that he is insulted. He courts Millamant only because she is the current belle ; he actually dislikes her because she is so anxious to be a wit herself that she gives him no opportunity to demonstrate his own wittiness.

The most telling attack on him by Congreve is in the scene with Sir Wilful, for no gentleman would refuse to recognize his own brother.

Petulant is best characterized by his name. Obviously, as Young Witwoud is excessively good natured, not even recognizing an insult, Petulant is ill natured, too eager to prove himself by ill manners. He too, like young Witwoud, is pretender to status. He is a liar, says Young Witwoud, a poser, and, of course, petulant.

He is an interesting specimen in that he talks of having a humour to be something or other—the sure sign that he is affecting the humour, although it may by long use have come to be, by Congreve's distinction, a habit.

**Q. 15. "It is a play in which appearances are deceptive, in which reality is slowly revealed." Discuss.**

*Or*

**Q. 16. "The basis of the relationship between characters in the play is not one of seeming but of reality." Do you agree ?**

**Ans.** *The Way of the World* was Congreve's last important piece of writing. Its subtlety was too refined for contemporary audiences and Congreve's Dedication of the play reflected his awareness of this :

"That it succeeded on the Stage, was almost beyond my Expectation, for but little of it was prepar'd for that general Taste which seem now to be predominant in the Pallates of our Audience.

Those Characters which are meant to be ridcul'd in most of our comedies, are of Fools so gross, that in my humble Opinion, they should rather disturb that divert the well—natur'd and reflecting Part of an Audience : they are rather Objects of Charity than Contempt ; and instead of moving our Mirth, they ought very often to excite our Compassion.

This Reflection moved me to design some Characters, which should appear ridiculous not so much thro' a natural Folly (which is incorrigible and therefore not proper for the State) as thro' an affected Wit ; which at the same time that is affected, is also false. As there is some Difficulty in the Formation of a Character of this Nature, so there is some Hazard which attends the Progress of its Success, upon the Stage : for many come to a Play, so over-charged with Criticism, that they very often let fly their Censure, when through their Rashness they have mistaken their aim."

Congreve was writing about the taste of an audience which existed after Jeremy Collier's outburst, one which was to indulge itself in sentimental drama as the eighteenth century progressed, and may well have failed to penetrate the deeper meanings of *The Way of the World*. Even Pope confessed to a failure in comprehension. "Tell me", he asked, 'if Congreve's fools are fools indeed ?" The answer lies partly in Congreve's Dedication in which he continued the passage quoted above about the audience's missing the meaning of the play with these words :

"This I had occasion lately to observe : For this Play had been acted two or three Days, before some of these hasty Judges cou'd find the leisure to distinguish betwixt the Character of a Witwoud and a True wit."

But the answer also lies, in part, in the fact that *The Way of the World* is not a play, the fullest meanings of which emerge obviously or at once to all who read it or are lucky enough to see it staged. It is a play in which appearances are deceptive, in which reality is slowly revealed. Even the plot seems at first to be more complex than it is. Congreve's plethora of Witwouds confuses the issues, as do the degrees of cousinship. This is a play as well as

familiarity. The older generation is represented by the widow of Sir Jonathan Wishfort, Lady Wishfort, whose two sisters are dead. Each of these sisters had a child. Lady Wishfort's daughter Arabella has married twice to Languish, who is dead, and subsequently to Fainall. One of Lady Wishfort's sisters was the mother of Millamant : the other the mother of Sir Wilful Witwoud.

The basis of the relationship between Millamant and Mirabell is not one of seeming but of reality. They have arrived at their own truth. They are not, like Fainall, ready merely to accept the way of the world. They have laid a basis for a real relationship because Mirabell's seriousness—has wareness of Millament's faults and of her determination not to allow him to become sententious—has been appreciated by Millamant. Her early flippancy and flirtatiousness have been a defence because she has been aware of the finality of marriage, and has wanted to be more than a chattel, to be a truly happy wife. She is an intelligent girl who wants her marriage to be one in which consummation does not mean the end of love. And she has found she love Mirabell violently.

Things have turned out not to be what they seemed, and characters have changed under the stresses of the plot. The comedy has exposed illusions one after the other. Like all great comedies, it has more than a little sense of the tragedy underlying life ; it is founded upon a moral and serious attitude to life : it even offers, in contrast to the superficially accepted way of the world, a glimpse of something more mature and attractive, at once more real and yet more refined, a suggested fusion of the best of Mirabell's masculinity and Millamant's feminity. The ritualistic dance which rounds off the comedy has its purpose. It blends the individuals with their social setting, and resolves some of their emotional conflicts : some dynastic order has been brought out of potential chaos.

**Q 17. Discuss the attitudes of nineteenth century writers to Restoration Comedy.**

(For answer, see chapter on "The Reputation of Restoration Drama".)

**Q. 18. "The genius of Millamant is that in her we love all the characteristics that we should normally deplore."—Do you agree ?**

(For answer, see chapter on "Main Characters of the Play.")

**Q. 19. Discuss the themes of *The Way of the World.***

(For answer, see chapter on "Themes of the play")

**Q. 20. Give your impression of Millamant. Do you consider Mirabell a fitting husband for her ?**

*Or*

**Q 21. "Mirabell" shows a world-wisdom that is close to world-weariness."—Discuss ?**

(For answer to Q. 20 and 21, see chapter on "Main Characters of of the Play".)

**Q. 22. Write a short essay on the various influences on Congreve as reflected in the play *The Way of the World*.**

**Ans.** In varying aspects Congreve's drama is always richly reminiscent of earlier drama. In *The Way of the World* the influence of Elizabethan tradition is considerably more diluted than in *Love for Love*, and the influence of Moliere is less marked than in *The Double Dealer*. Although certain specific borrowings are made from both sources, *The Way of the World* remains essentially the superlative expression of the courtly mode initiated in pre-Restoration court drama and sustained and enhanced by Congreve's precursors in Restoration comedy.

In a subplot which has important bearings on the main action *The Way of the World* revives a phase of the intrigue in Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* (1616). Fitzdottrel and Fainall both treat their wives unfairly and are disposed to desert them for other women. Both wives have lovers who champion their interests and who reduce the husband to a state of financial dependence on these abused mates. In Jonson's comedy Wittipol secures Fitzdottrel's estate for Frances by causing the unsuspecting Fitzdottrel to convey it in trust to Manly, Wittipol's good friend. In *The Way of the World* Mrs. Fainall had the foresight to give her estate in trust to Mirabell before her marriage with Fainall. Toward the close of each play the husband is suddenly informed of the financial authority with which the signing of the deed has invested his wife, and the wife's security in this matter brings about the husband's surrender and effects a modus vivendi for all parties. The Elizabethan influence is also conspicuous in the portrait of Sir Wilful Witwoud, the boorish country rustic, representing a type that throughout the Restoration period continued to offset the elegance of the city gallant.

In a general way certain characters and certain scenes in *The Way of the World* owe a debt to Moliere. The role of Waitwell resembles that of Mascarille in *Les Precieuses Ridicules*, although Waitwell's courtship of Lady Wishfort is much more condensed than Mascarille's similar exploit. Lady Wishfort's pert maid Foible is in the tradition of Moliere's saucy soubrettes, and there is a parallel between the relations of lumpish Peg and her mistress and those of Andree and the Countess in *La Comtesse a Escarbagnas*.

Comparisons are often made between *The Way of the World* and *Le Misanthrope*, in which masterpiece Moliere is more preoccupied than elsewhere with the tyranny of fashionable society and offers no remedy for its encroachments. Celimenex and Millament have no equals in all the arts of coquetry. In the quarrels of Millamant and Marwood and Celimence and Arsonoe the two younger women deprecate with similar irony their unassailable advantages of youthful charm. It is true that in *Le Misanthrope* Moliere permits "the way of the world" to pose a more serious threat to sensible living than in any of his other plays. Yet Celimence, heartless at twenty, seems likely to remain so : Alceste's indignant strictures against the beau monde cannot be laughed away ; and the compliant and urbane Philmae cuts a rather sorry figure.

Common sense, so violated in Le Misanthrope, remains Moliere's comic standard of judgment. By its terms he defines folly and gives wisdom its due. He exposes folly and wishes, whenever

possible, to cure it : whereas Congreve, also exposing folly, has not the slightest corrective intention. Congreve's laughter at fools is good natured : he enjoys them. They are ridiculous because they play the social game unintelligently or extravagantly. They mean well and are usually harmless people in a world where good taste, rather than good sense, is the mark of a disciplined life. With Moliere all affectation is folly. Congreve reserves a milder laughter far the intelligent, sensitive, but still affected gentlemen and ladies who constitute his ideal af social excellence, who play the social game with perfect dexterity, with complete grace, but at the expense of their humanity. For the art of being civilized is, after all, delicious fiction, an amazing make belief, denying those normal human emotions which sooner or later must intrude and must be reckoned with. Like the Restoration dramatists who preceded him and unlike Moliere, Congreve limited his world to an artificial society, the vagaries of which he pretty thoroughly explored.

Declining to adapt himself to the sentimental vogue in comedy which Colley Cibber was popularizing, Congreve chose to follow the literary conventions which had been initiated at the court of Charles I and which, in brighter patterns, had delighted the court of Charles II. The precise code of etiquette introduced from France to please the French taste of Queen Henrietta Maria, had for many years determined the basic requirements of English comedies of manners.

By the rules of that code, briefly stated, a courtship which finally terminates in marriage must be hampered by the hero's lingering relations with other women, which may not be abruptly and rudely broken off. Thus in *The Way of the World* Mirabell must divert Lady Wishfort with the amorous attentions of Sir Rowland, thwart Marwood's jealous scheming, and reconcile the Fainall before he can win the hand of Millamant. Mirabell's good taste, as he achieves these objectives, is opposed by the extravagant had taste of Witwoud and Petulant, the rustic gaucherie of Sir Wilful, and the ill-bred wooing of Waitwell, the servant masquerading as courtier.

Such false wits as Witwoud and Petulant are familiar figures in Restoration comedy. Like Cutter and Worm in Cowley's *The Cutter of Coleman Street* (1661) they are "detracting fops", each disparaging his friend in a burst of confidence to a third party. Cutter privately assures Lucia that Worm is "a good ingenious fellow, that's the truth on't, and a pleasant droll when has got a cup o'wine in his pate" but is not to be trusted in serious matters. In a similar confession, Worm explains to Lucia that Cutter is an unreliable fellow, only "he has some wit (to give the devil his due) and that 'this makes us endure him". In the same spirit, Witwoud confides to Mirabell fellow, that Petulant has "a pretty deal of an odd sort of a small wit and if he had but any judgment in the world, he would not be altogether contemptible" And Petulant pays Witwoud back in his own coin by describing him to Mirabell as "soft, you know...he's what you call a—what-d'ye call-'em a fine gentleman, but he's silly withal". In spite of mutual reservations.

Witwoud and Petulant enjoy a congenial comaraderie, They conform to a literary tradition which prescribes their agility in witty raillery.

Mrs. Fainall, loyal to Mirabell, is the least conventional of the "other" women in Mirabell's life. Mrs. Marwood is doomed to failure in her attempts to reclaim a young lover, like Loveit in Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), numerous affected older women in the comedies of Thomas Shadwell, and Congreve's own Lady Touchwood in *The Double Dealer*. Lady Wishfort is the old couquette per excellence. Her name and taste recall Love it in *The Man of Mode* and Lady Loveyouth in Shadwell's the *Humourists* (1670). Shadwell had created a whole gallery of such portraits. When Lady Wishfort represses her fastidiousness and encourages the grotesque wooing of Sir Rowland her behaviour resembles Beliza's treatment of the vulgar Bernade in Shadwell's *The Amorous Bigot* (1690): Lady Wishfort's pride in the refined education of her daughter, who, however, sadly shames her, parrallels Lady Fantast's satisfaction in her ridiculous training of a similar daughter in Shadwell's *Bury Fair* (1689). But Lady Wishfort's characterization is more rounded than that of person resembling her in earlier comedy. With his usual good humour and perceptiveness, Congreve softens her conventional follies.

In the courtship scenes of *The Way of the World* Congreve followed well established conventions for railing lovers. Mirabell and Millamant had been presaged by Benedick and Beatrice in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, by Fairfield and Carol in Shirley's *Hyde Park* (1632), and by various lesser lights in Jacobean comedies, sex duels, often culminating in "proviso" scenes, had long been popular with Restoration dramatists,

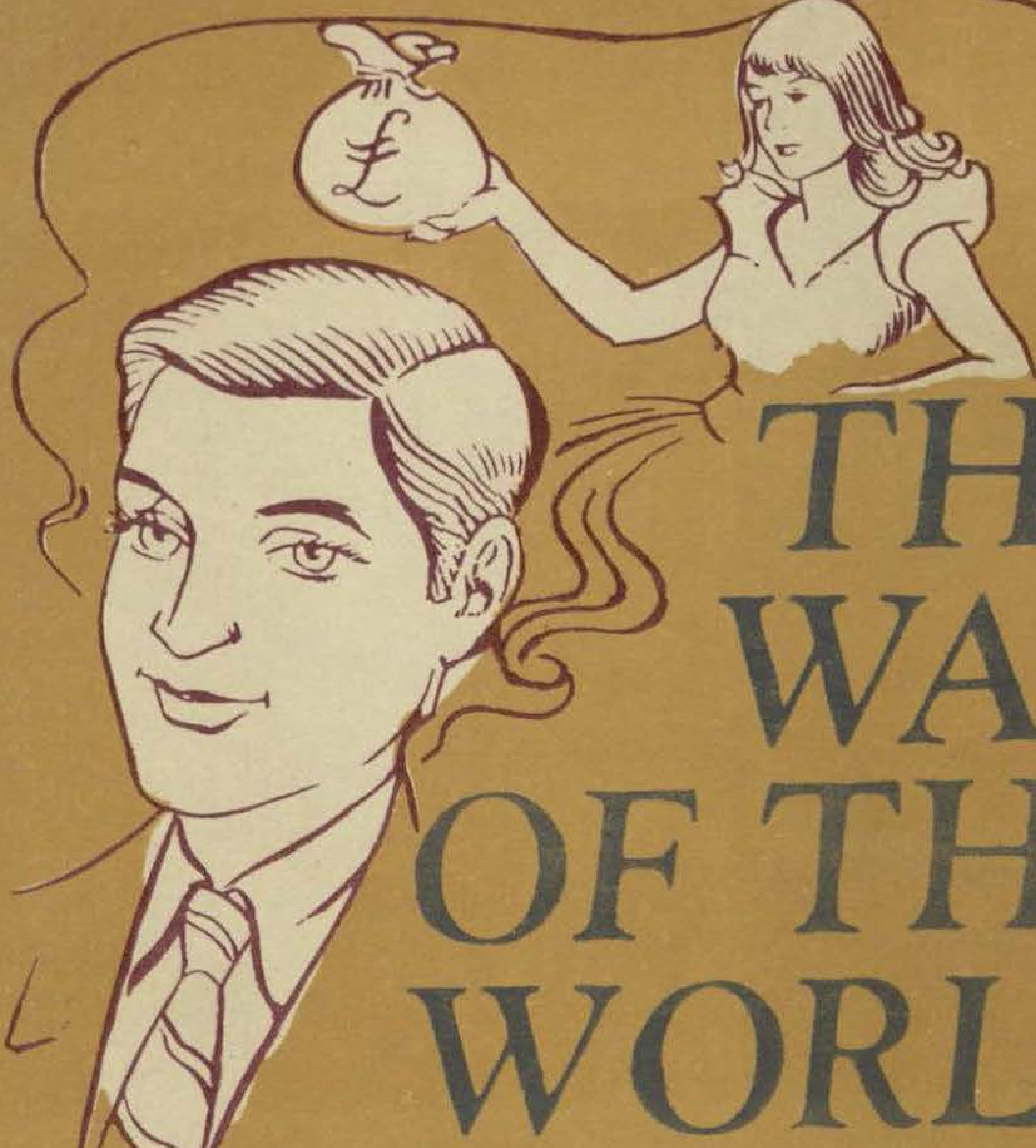
# 25

## *Chronology of Important Dates*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1670 | Born at Bardsey, near Leeds. |
| 1685 | Goes to Trinity College, Dublin. |
| 1692 | Publishes *Incognito*, under the name of Cleophil. |
| 1692 | Translates the 11th satire of Juvenal for Dryden's translation. Writes complimentary verses for Dryden's *Persius on Mrs. Arabella Hunt Singing.* |
| 1693 | *The Old Ba helor.* |
| 1694 | *The Double Dealer.* |
| 1694 | Obtains a post in the Pipe Office. |
| 1695 | *The Mourning Muse of Alexis.* |
| 1695 | *Love for Love.* |
| 1695 | *Ode to the King.* |
| 1695 | *Letter to Dennis Concerning Humours in Comedy.* |
| 1695 | Becomes commissioner for Licensing hackney coaches. |
| 1697 | *The Mourning Bride.* |
| 1697 | *The Birth of the Muse.* |
| 1698 | Amendments of Mr. Collier False and Imperfect Citations. |
| 1700 | *The Way of the World.* |
| 1701 | *The Judgment of Paris.* |
| 1701 | *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* |
| 1704 | Squire Trelooby, an adaptation from Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, in collaboration with Vanbrugh and Walsh. |
| 1705 | *The Tears of Amaryllis.* |
| 1705 | Is given a place in the Customs. |
| 1706 | *A Pindaric Ode to the Queen*, with *A Discourse on the Pindaric Ode.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1710 | Publication of his Works, with *Semele*. |
| 1714 | Place in the Customs bettered. |
| 1714 | Receives in addition the secretaryship of the Island of Jamaica. |
| 1720 | Pope dedicates his *Iliad* to him. |
| 1722 | Steele dedicates to him his edition of Addison's *The Drummer*. |
| 1726 | Is visited by Voltaire. |
| 1729 | Dies. |
| 1729 | *Epistle to Lord Cobbam* posthumously published, written in 1728. |

WILLIAM CONGREVE



# THE WAY OF THE WORLD

**KITAB MAHAL**
URDU BAZAR, LAHORE.